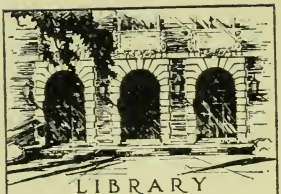

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CHANTRY HOUSE

CHANTRY HOUSE

BY

CHARLOTTE M. YONGE

AUTHOR OF 'THE HEIR OF REDCLYFFE,' 'UNKNOWN TO HISTORY,' ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

London

MACMILLAN AND CO.

1886

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CHAPTER I.

AFTER THE TEMPEST.

'Nor deem the irrevocable past
As wholly wasted, wholly vain,
If rising on its wrecks at last
To something nobler we attain.'—LONGFELLOW.

ALL the rest of the family were out, and I was relieved by being alone with my distress, not forced to hide it, when the door opened and 'Mr. Castleford' was announced. After one moment's look at me, one touch of my hand, he must have seen that I was faint with anxiety, and said, 'It is all right, Edward; I see you know all. I am come from Bristol to tell your father that he may be proud of his son Clarence.'

I don't know what I did. Perhaps I sobbed and cried, but the first words I could get out were, 'Does he know? Oh! it may be too late. He may be gone off to sea!' I cried, breaking out with my chief fear. Mr. Castleford looked astounded, then said, 'I trust not. I sent off a special messenger last night, as soon as I saw my way——'

Then I breathed a little more freely, and could understand what he was telling me, namely, that Tooke had accused Clarence of abstracting £20 from the sum in his charge. The fellow accounted for it by explaining that young Winslow had been paying extravagant bills at a tavern, where the barmaid showed his presents, and boasted of her conquest. All this had been written to Mr. Castleford by his partner, and he was told that it was out of deference to himself that his *protégé* was not in custody, nor had received notice of dismissal; but, no doubt, he would give his sanction to immediate measures, and communicate with the family.

The effect had been to make the good man hurry at once from the Giant's Causeway to Bristol, where he had arrived on Sunday, to investigate the books and examine the underlings. In the midst Tooke attempted to abscond, but he was brought back as he was embarking in an American vessel; and he then confessed the whole,—how speculation had led to dishonesty, and following evil customs not uncommon in other firms. Then, when the fugitive found that young Winslow was too acute to be blinded, and that it had been a still greater mistake to try to overcome his integrity, self-defence required his ruin, or at any rate his expulsion, before he could gain Mr. Castleford's ear.

Tooke really believed that the discreditable bills

were the young man's own, and proofs of concealed habits of dissipation; but this excellent man had gone into the matter, repaired to the tradesfolk, learnt the date, and whose the accounts really were, and had even hunted up the barmaid, who was not married after all, and had no hesitation in avowing that her beau had been the handsome young Yeomanry lieutenant. Mr. Castleford had spent the greater part of Monday in this painful task, but had not been clear enough till quite late in the evening to despatch an express to his partner, and to Clarence, whom he desired to meet him here.

'He has acted nobly,' said our kind friend. 'His only error seems to have been in being too good a brother.'

This made me implore that nothing should be said about Griffith's bills, showing those injunctions of Clarence's which had so puzzled me, and explaining the circumstances.

Mr. Castleford hummed and hawed, and perhaps wished he had seen my father before me; but I prevailed at last, and when the others came in from their drive, there was nothing to alloy the intelligence that Clarence had shown rare discernment, as well as great uprightness, steadfastness, and moral courage.

My mother, when she had taken in the fact, actually shed tears of joy. Emily stood by me, holding my hand. My father said, 'It is all owing

to you, Castleford, and the helping hand you gave the poor boy.'

'Nay,' was the answer, 'it seems to me that it was owing to his having the root of the matter in him to overcome his natural failings.'

Still, in all the rejoicing, my heart failed me lest the express should have come too late, and Clarence should be already on the high seas, for there had been no letter from him on Sunday morning. It was doubtful whether Mr. Castleford's messenger could reach London in time for tidings to come down by the coach—far less did we expect Clarence—and we had nearly finished the first course at dinner, when we heard the front door open, and a voice speaking to the butler. Emily screamed 'It's he! Oh mamma, may I?' and flew out into the hall, dragging in a pale, worn and weary wight, all dust and heat, having travelled down outside the coach on a broiling day, and walked the rest of the way. He looked quite bewildered at the rush at him; my father's 'Well done, Clarence,' and strong clasp; and my mother's fervent kiss, and muttered something about washing his hands.

Formal folks, such as we were, had to sit in our chairs; and when he came back apologising for not dressing, as he had left his portmanteau for the carrier, he looked so white and ill that we were quite shocked, and began to realise what he had

suffered. He could not eat the food that was brought back for him, and allowed that his head was aching dreadfully; but, after a glass of wine had been administered, it was extracted that he had met Mr. Frith at the office door, and been gruffly told that Mr. Castleford was satisfied, and he might consider himself acquitted.

'And then I had your letter, sir, thank you,' said Clarence, scarcely restraining his tears.

'The thanks are on our side, my dear boy,' said Mr. Castleford. 'I must talk it over with you, but not till you have had a night's rest. You look as if you had not known one for a good while.'

Clarence gave a sort of trembling smile, not trusting himself to speak. Approbation at home was so new and strange to him that he could scarcely bear it, worn out as he was by nearly a month of doubt, distress, apprehension, and self-debate.

My mother went herself to hasten the preparation of his room, and after she had sent him to bed went again to satisfy herself that he was comfortable and not feverish. She came back wiping away a tear, and saying he had looked up at her just as when she had the three of us in our nursery cribs. In truth these two had seldom been so happy together since those days, though the dear mother, while thankful that he had not failed, was little aware of the conflict his resolution had cost him, and

the hot journey and long walk came in for more blame for his exhaustion than they entirely deserved.

My father perhaps understood more of the trial; for when she came back, declaring that all that was needed was sleep, and forbidding me to go to my room before bedtime, he said he must bid the boy good-night.

And he spoke as his reserve would have never let him speak at any other time, telling Clarence how deeply thankful he felt for the manifestation of such truthfulness and moral courage as he said showed that the man had conquered the failings of the boy.

Nevertheless, when I retired for the night, it was to find Clarence asleep indeed, but most uneasily, tossing, moaning, and muttering broken sentences about 'disgracing his pennant,' 'never bearing to see mamma's face'—and the like. I thought it a kindness to wake him, and he started up. 'Ted, is it you? I thought I should never hear your dear old crutch again! Is it really all right'—then, sitting up and passing his hand over his face, 'I always mix it up with the old affair, and think the court-martial is coming again.'

'There's all the difference now.'

'Thank God! yes—He has dragged me through! But it did not seem so in one's sleep, nor waking neither—though sleep is worst, and happily there

was not much of that! Sit down, Ted; I want to look at you. I can't believe it is not three weeks since I saw you last.'

We talked it all out, and I came to some perception of the fearful ordeal it had been—first, in the decision neither to shut his eyes, nor to conceal that they were open; and then in the lack of presence of mind and the sense of confusion that always beset him when browbeaten and talked down, so that, in the critical contest with Tooke, he felt as if his feet were slipping from under him, and what had once been clear to him was becoming dim, so that he had only been assured that he had held his ground by Tooke's redoubled persuasions and increased anger. And for a clerk, whose years were only twenty-one, to oppose a manager, who had been in the service more than the whole of that space, was preposterous insolence, and likely to result in the utter ruin of his own prospects, and the character he had begun to retrieve. It was just after this, the real crisis, that he had the only dream which had not been misery and distress. In it she—she yonder—yes, the lady with the lamp, came and stood by him, and said, 'Be steadfast.'

'It was a dream,' said Clarence. 'She was not as she is in the mullion room, not crying, but with a sweet, sad look, almost like Miss Fordyce—if Miss Fordyce ever looked sad. It was only a dream.'

Yet it had so refreshed and comforted him that we have often since discussed whether the spirit really visited him, or whether this was the manner in which conscience and imagination acted on his brain. Indeed, he always believed that the dream had been either heaven-sent or heaven-permitted.

The die had been cast in that interview when he had let it be seen that he was dangerous, and could not be bought over. The after consequences had been the terrible distress and temptation I have before described, only most inadequately. 'But that,' said Clarence, half smiling, 'only came of my being such a wretched creature as I am. There, dear old Miss Newton saved me—yes, she did—most unconsciously, dear old soul. Don't you remember how Griff used to say she maundered over the text. Well, she did it all the way home in my ear, as she clung to my arm—"Be strong, and He shall comfort thine heart." And then I knew my despair and determination to leave it all behind were a temptation—"the old story," as you told me, and I prayed God to help me, and just managed to fight it out. Thank God for her!'

If it had not been for that good woman, he would have been out of reach—already out in the river—before Mr. Castleford's messenger had reached London! He might call himself a poor creature—and certainly a man of harder, bolder stuff

would not have fared so badly in the strife; but it always seemed to me in after years that much of what he called the poor creature—the old, nervous, timid, diffident self—had been shaken off in that desperate struggle, perhaps because it had really given him more self-reliance, and certainly inspired others with confidence in him.

We talked late enough to have horrified my mother, but I did not leave him till he was sleeping like a child, nor did he wake till I was leaving the room at the sound of the bell. It was alleged that it was the first time in his life that he had been late for prayers. Mr. Castleford said he was very glad, and my mother, looking severely at me, said she knew we had been talking all night, and then went off to satisfy herself whether he ought to be getting up.

There was no doubt on that score, for he was quite himself again, though he was, in looks and in weariness, just as if he had recovered from a bad illness, or, as he put it himself, he felt as tired and bruised as if he had been in a stiff gale. Mr. Castleford was sorry to be obliged to ask him to go through the whole matter with him in the study, and the result was that he was pronounced to have an admirable head for business, as well as the higher qualities that had been put to the test. After that his good friend insisted that he should have a long

and complete holiday, at first proposing to take him to Ireland, but giving the notion up on hearing of our projected excursion to the north of Devon. Pending this, Clarence was, for nearly a week, fit for nothing but lying on the grass in the shade, playing with the cats and dogs, or with little Anne, looking over our drawings, listening to Wordsworth, our reigning idol,—and enjoying, with almost touching gratitude, the first approach to petting that had ever fallen to his share.

The only trouble on his mind was the Quarter-Session. Mr. Castleford would hardly have prosecuted an old employé, but Mr. Frith was furious, and resolved to make an example. Tooke had, however, so carefully entrenched himself that nothing could be actually made a subject of prosecution but the abstraction of the £20 of which he had accused Clarence, who had to prove the having received and delivered it.

It was a very painful affair, and Tooke was sentenced to seven years' transportation. I believe he became a very rich and prosperous man in New South Wales, and founded a family. My father received warm compliments upon his sons, and Clarence had the new sensation of being honourably coupled with Griffith, though he laughed at the idea of mere honesty with fierce struggles being placed beside heroism with no struggle at all.

CHAPTER II.

HOLIDAY-MAKING.

'The child upon the mountain side
Plays fearless and at ease,
While the hush of purple evening
Spreads over earth and seas.
The valley lies in shadow,
But the valley lies afar;
And the mountain is a slope of light
Upreaching to a star.'

MENELLA SMEDLEY.

How pleasant it was to hear Griffith's cheery voice, as he swung himself down, out of a cloud of dust, from the top of the coach at the wayside stage-house, whither Clarence and I had driven in the new britshka to meet him. While the four fine coach-horses were led off, and their successors harnessed in almost the twinkling of an eye, Griff was with us; and we did nothing but laugh and poke fun at each other all the way home, without a word of graver matters.

I was resolved, however, that Griff should know how terribly his commission had added to Clarence's danger, and how carefully the secret had been

guarded; and the first time I could get him alone, I told him the whole.

The effect was one of his most overwhelming fits of laughter. 'Poor old Bill! To think of his being accused of gallanting about with barmaids! (an explosion at every pause) and revelling with officers! Poor old Bill! it was as bad as Malvolio himself.'

When, indignant at the mirth excited by what had nearly cost us so dear, I observed that these items had nearly turned the scale against our brother, Griff demanded how we could have been such idiots as not to have written to him; I might at least have had the sense to do so. As to its doing him harm at Hillside, Parson Frank was no fool, and knew what men were made of! Griff would have taken the risk, come at once, and thrust the story down the fellow's throat (as indeed he would have done). The idea of Betsy putting up with a pious young man like Bill, whose only flame had ever been old Miss Newton!' And he roared again at the incongruous pair. 'Oh, wasn't she married after all, the hussy? She always had a dozen beaux, and professed to be on the point of putting up her banns; so if the earrings were not a wedding present, they might have been, ought to have been, and would be some time or other.'

Then he patted me, and declared there was no occasion for my disgusted looks, for no one knew

better than himself that he had the best brace of brothers in existence, wanting in nothing but common sense and knowledge of the world. As to Betsy—faugh! I need not make myself uneasy about her; she knew what a civil word was worth much better than I did.

He showed considerable affection for Clarence after a fashion of his own, which we three perfectly understood, and preferred to anything more conventional. Griff was always delightful, and he was especially so on that vacation, when every one was in high spirits; so that the journey is, as I look back on it, like a spot of brilliant sunshine in the distant landscape.

Mrs. Fordyce kept house with her father-in-law, little Anne, and Martyn, whose holidays began a week after we had started. The two children were allowed to make a desert island and a robbers' cave in the beech wood; and the adventures which their imaginations underwent there completely threw ours into the shade.

The three ladies and I started in the big Hillside open carriage, with my brothers on the box and the two fathers on horseback. Frank Fordyce was a splendid rider, as indeed was the old rector, who had followed the hounds, made a leap over a fearful chasm, still known as the Parson's Stride, and had been an excellent shot. The renunciation of field

sports had been a severe sacrifice to Frank Fordyce, and showed of what excellent stuff he was made. He used to say that it was his own fault that he had to give them up; another man would have been less engrossed by them. Though he only read by fits and starts when his enthusiasm was excited, he was thorough, able, and acute, and his intelligence and sympathy were my father's best compensation for the loss of London society.

The two riders were a great contrast. Mr. Winslow had the thoroughly well-appointed, somewhat precise, and highly-polished air of a barrister, and a thin, somewhat worn and colourless face, with grizzled hair and white whiskers; and though he rode well, with full command of his horse, he was old enough to have chosen Chancery for her sterling qualities. Parson Frank, on the other hand, though a thorough gentleman, was as ruddy and weather-browned as any farmer, and—albeit his features were handsome and refined, and his figure well poised and athletic—he lost something of dignity by easiness of gesture and carelessness of dress, except on state occasions, when he discarded his beloved rusty old coat and Oxford mixture trousers, and came out magnificent enough for an archdeacon, if not an archbishop; while his magnificent horse, Cossack, was an animal that a sporting duke might have envied.

Nothing ever tired that couple, but my father had stipulated for exchanges with Griffith. On these occasions it almost invariably happened that there was a fine view for Ellen to see, so that she was exalted to the box with Griffith to show it to her, and Chancery was consigned to Clarence. Griff was wont to say that Chancery deserved her name, and that he would defy the ninety-ninth part of a tailor to come to harm with her; but Clarence was utterly unpractised in riding, did not like it, was tormented lest Cossack's antics should corrupt Chancery, and was mortally afraid of breaking the knees of the precious mare. Not all Parson Frank's good advice and kindly raillery would induce him to risk riding her on a descent; and as our travels were entirely up and down hill, he was often left leading her far behind, in hot sun or misty rain, and then would come cantering hastily up, reckless of parallels with John Gilpin, and only anxious to be in time to help me out at the halting-place; but more than once only coming in when the beefsteaks were losing their first charm, and then good-humouredly serving as the general butt for his noble horsemanship. Did any one fully comprehend how much pleasanter our journey was through the presence of one person entirely at the service of the others? For my own part, it made an immense difference to have one pair of strong arms and dextrous well-

accustomed hands always at my service, enabling me to accomplish what no one else, kind as all were, would have ventured on letting me attempt. Primarily, he was my devoted slave; but he was at the beck and call of every one, making the inquiries, managing the bargains, going off in search of whatever was wanting—taking in fact all the 'must be dones' of the journal. The contemplation of Cossack and Chancery being rubbed down, and devouring their oats was so delightful to Frank Fordyce and Griffith that they seldom wished to shirk it; but if there were any more pleasing occupation, it was a matter of course that Clarence should watch to see that the ostlers did their duty by the animals—an obsolete ceremony, by the bye. He even succeeded in hunting up and hiring a side saddle when the lovers, with the masterfulness of their nature, devised appropriating the horses at all the most beautiful places, in spite of Frank's murmur, 'What will mamma say?' But, as Griff said, it was a real mercy, for Ellen was infinitely more at her ease with Chancery than was Clarence. Then Emily had Clarence to walk up the hills with her, and help her in botany—her special department in our tour. Mine was sketching, Ellen's, keeping the journal, though we all shared in each other's work at times; and Griff, whose line was decidedly love-making, interfered considerably with us all, especially with our chronicler.

I spare you the tour, young people; it lies before me on the table, profusely illustrated and written in many hands. As I turn it over, I see noble Dunster on its rock; Clarence leading Chancery down Porlock Hill; Parson Frank in vain pursuit of his favourite ancient hat over that wild and windy waste, the sheep running away from him; a boat tossing at lovely Minehead; a 'native' bargaining over a crab with my mother; the wonderful Valley of Rocks, and many another scene, ludicrous or grand; for, indeed, we were for ever taking the one step between the sublime and the ridiculous! I am inclined to believe it is as well worth reading as many that have rushed into print, and it is full of precious reminiscences to Emily and me; but the younger generation may judge for itself, and it would be an interruption here. The country we saw was of utterly unimagined beauty to the untravelled eyes of most of us. I remember Ellen standing on Hartland Point, with her face to the infinite expanse of the Atlantic, and waving back Griff with 'Oh, don't speak to me.' Yet the sea was a delight above all to my mother and Clarence. To them it was a beloved friend; and magnificent as was Lynmouth, wonderful as was Clovelly, and glorious as was Hartland, I believe they would equally have welcomed the waves if they had been on the flattest of muddy shores! The ripple, plash, and roar were as familiar voices, the salt

smell as native air; and my mother never had thawed so entirely towards Clarence as when she found him the only person who could thoroughly participate her feeling.

At Minehead they stayed out, walking up and down together in the summer twilight till long after every one else was tired out, and had gone in; and when at last they appeared she was leaning on Clarence's arm, an unprecedented spectacle!

At Appledore, the only place on that rugged coast where boating tempted them, there was what they called a pretty little breeze, but quite enough to make all the rest of us decline venturing out into Bideford bay. They, however, found a boatman and made a trip, which was evidently such enjoyment to them, that my father, who had been a little restless and uneasy all the time, declared on their return that he felt quite jealous of Neptune, and had never known what a cruelty he was committing in asking a sea-nymph to marry a London lawyer.

Mr. Fordyce told him he was afraid of being like the fisherman who wedded a mermaid, and made Ellen tell the story in her own pretty way; but while we were laughing over it, I saw my mother steal her hand into my father's and give it a strong grasp. Such gestures, which she denominated pawing, when she witnessed them in Emily, were so alien to her in general that no doubt this little

action was infinitely expressive to her husband. She was wonderfully softened, and Clarence implied to me that it was the first time she had ever seemed to grieve for him more than she despised him, or to recognise his deprivation more than his disgrace,—implied, I say, for the words he used were little more than—'You can't think how nice she was to me.'

The regaining of esteem and self-respect was lessening Clarence's bashfulness, and bringing out his powers of conversation, so that he began to be appreciated as a pleasant companion, answering Griff's raillery in like fashion, and holding his own in good-natured repartee. Mr. Fordyce got on excellently with him in their tête-à-têtes (who would not with Parson Frank?), and held him in higher estimation than did Ellen. To her, honesty was common, tame, and uninteresting in comparison with heroism; and Griff's vague statement that Clarence was the best brother in the world did not go for much. Emily and I longed to get the two better acquainted, but it did not become possible while Griff absorbed the maiden as his exclusive property.

The engagement was treated as an avowed and settled thing, though I do not know that there had been a formal ratification by the parents; but in truth Mrs. Fordyce must have tacitly yielded her consent when she permitted her daughter to make the journey under the guardianship of Parson Frank.

After a walk in the ravine of Lynton, we became aware of a ring upon Ellen's finger; and Emily was allowed at night to hear how and when it had been put on.

Ellen only slightly deepened her lovely carnation tints when her father indulged in a little tender teasing and lamentation over himself. She was thoroughly happy and proud of her hero, and not ashamed of owning it.

There was one evening when she and I were sitting with our sketchbooks in the shade on the beech at Ilfracombe, while the rest had gone, some to bathe, the others to make purchases in the town. We had been condoling with one another over the impossibility of finding anything among our water-colours that would express the wondrous tints before our eyes.

'No, nothing can do it,' I said at last; 'we can only make a sort of blot to assist our memories.'

'Sunshine outside and in!' said Ellen. 'The memory of such days as these can never fade away, —no, nor thankfulness for them, I hope.'

Something then passed about the fact that it was quite possible to go on in complete content in a quiet monotonous life, in an oyster-like way, till suddenly there was an unveiling and opening of unimagined capacities of enjoyment—as by a scene like this before us, by a great poem, an oratorio, or,

as I supposed, by Niagara or the Alps. Ellen put it—'Oh! and by feelings for the great and good!' Dear girl, her colour deepened, and I am sure she meant her bliss in her connection with her hero. Presently, however, she passed on to saying how such revelations of unsuspected powers of enjoyment helped one to enter into what was meant by 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him.' Then there was a silence, and an inevitable quoting of the *Christian Year*, the guide to all our best thoughts—

'But patience, there may come a time.'

And then a turning to the 'Ode to Immortality,' for Wordsworth was our second leader, and we carried him on our tour as our one secular book, as Keble was our one religious book. We felt that the principal joy of all this beauty and delight was because there was something beyond. Presently Ellen said, prettily and shyly, 'I am sure all this has opened much more to me than I ever thought of. I always used to be glad that we had no brothers, because our cousins were not always pleasant with us; but now I have learnt what valuable possessions they are,' she added, with the sweetest, prettiest glance of her bright eyes.

I ventured to say that I was glad she said they,

and hoped it was a sign that she was finding out Clarence.

'I have found out that I behaved so ill to him that I have been ashamed ever since to look at him or speak to him,' said Ellen; 'I long to ask his pardon, but I believe that would distress him more than anything.'

In which she was right; and I was able to tell her of the excuses there had been for the poor boy, how he had suffered, and how he had striven to conquer his failings; and she replied that the words 'Judge not, that ye be not judged,' always smote her with the remembrance of her disdainfully cantering past him. There was a tear on her eyelashes, and it drew from me an apology for having brought a painful recollection into our bright day.

'There must be shade to throw up the lights,' she said, with her sparkling look.

Was it shade that we never fell into one of these grave talks when Griffith was present, and that the slightest approach to them was sure to be turned by him into jest?

We made our journey a little longer than we intended, crossing the moors so as to spend a Sunday at Exeter; but Frank Fordyce left us, not liking to give his father the entire duty of a third Sunday.

Emily says she has come to have a superstition that extensions of original plans never turn out well,

and certainly some of the charm of our journey departed with the merry, genial Parson Frank. Our mother was more anxious about Ellen, and put more restrictions on the lovers than when the father was present to sanction their doings. Griffith absolutely broke out against her in a way he had never ventured before, when she forbade Ellen's riding with him when he wanted to hire a horse at Lydford and take an excursion on the moor before joining us at Okehampton.

My father looked up, and said, 'Griffith, I am surprised at you.' He was constrained to mutter some apology, and I believe Ellen privately begged my mother's pardon, owning her to have been quite right; but, by the dear girl, the wonderful cascade and narrow gorge were seen through swollen eyes. And poor Clarence must have had a fine time of it when Griffith had to ride off with him *faute de mieux*.

All was cleared off, however, when we met again, for Griff's storms were very fleeting, and Ellen treated him as if she had to make her own peace with him. She sacrificed her own enjoyment of Exeter Cathedral to go about with him when he had had enough of it, but on Sunday afternoon she altogether declined to walk with him till after the second service. He laughed at her supposed passion for sacred music, and offered to wait with her to

hear the anthem from the nave. 'No,' she said, 'that would be amusing ourselves instead of worshipping.'

'We've done our devoir in that way already,' said Griff. 'Paid our dues.'

'One can't,' cried Ellen, with an eager look. 'One longs to do all the more when He has just let us have such a taste of His beautiful things.'

'*One*, perhaps, when *one* is a little saint,' returned Griff.

'Oh don't, Griff! I'm not *that;* but you know every one wants all the help and blessing that can be got. And then it is so delightful!'

He gave a long whistle. 'Every one to his taste,' he said; 'especially you ladies.'

He did come to the Cathedral with us, but he had more than half spoilt this last Sunday. Did he value her for what was best in her, or was her influence raising him?

CHAPTER III.

C. MORBUS, ESQ.

' Forgot were hatred, wrongs, and fears,
The plaintive voice alone she hears,
Sees but the dying man.'

SCOTT.

C. MORBUS, Esq. Such was the card that some wicked wag, one of Clarence's fellow-clerks probably, left at his lodgings in the course of the epidemic which was beginning its ravages even while we were upon our pleasant journey—a shade indeed to throw out the light.

In these days, the tidings of a visitation of cholera are heard with compassion for crowded towns, but without special alarm for ourselves or our friends, since its conditions and the mode of combating it have come to be fairly understood.

In 1832, however, it was a disease almost unknown and unprecedented except in its Indian abode, whence it had advanced city by city, seaport by seaport, sweeping down multitudes before it; nor had science yet discovered how to encounter or forestall it. We heard of it in a helpless sort of

way, as if it had been the plague or the Black Death, and thought of its victims as doomed.

That terrible German engraving, 'Death as a Foe,' which represents the grisly form as invading a ballroom in Paris, is an expression of the feeling with which the scourge was regarded on that first occasion. *Two Years Ago* gives some notion of the condition of things in 1849, but by that time there had been some experience, and means of prevention were better understood. On the alarm in that year there was a great inspection of cottages throughout Earlscombe and Hillside, but in 1832 there was no notion of such precautions. Nevertheless, on neither visitation, nor any subsequent one, has the disease come nearer to us than Bristol.

As far as memory serves me, the idea was that wholesome food, regular habits, and cleanliness were some protection, but one locality might be as dangerous as another. There had been cases in London all the spring, but no special anxiety was felt when Clarence returned to his work in the end of July, much refreshed and invigorated by his holiday, and with the understanding that he was to have a rise in position and salary on Mr. Castleford's return from Ireland, where he was still staying with his wife's relations. Clarence was received at the office with a kind of shamefaced cordiality, as if every one would fain forget the way in which he had been

treated; and he was struck by finding that all the talk was of the advances of the cholera, chiefly at Rotherhithe. And a great shock awaited him. He went, as soon as business hours were over, to thank good old Miss Newton for the comfort and aid she had unwittingly given him, and to tell her from what she had saved him. Alas! it was the last benefit she was ever to confer on her old pupil. At the door he was told by a weeping, terrified maid that she was very ill with cholera, and that no hope was given. He tried to send up a message, but she was in a state of collapse and insensible; and when he inquired the next morning, the gentle spirit had passed away.

He attended her funeral that same evening. Griff said it was a proof how your timid people will do the most foolhardy things; but Clarence always held that the good woman had really done more for him than any one in actually establishing a contact, so to say, between his spirit and external truth, and he thought no mark of respect beyond her deserts. She was a heavy loss to him, for no one else in town gave him the sense of home kindness; and there was much more to depress him, for several of his Sunday class were dead, and the school had been broken up for the time, while the heats and the fruits of August contributed to raise the mortality.

His return had released a couple more clerks for

their holiday; it was a slack time of year, with less business in hand than usual, and the place looked empty. Mr. Frith worked on as usual, but preserved an ungracious attitude, as though he were either still incredulous or, if convinced against his will, resolved that 'that prig of a Winslow' should not presume upon his services. Altogether the poor fellow was quite unhinged, and wrote such dismal bills of mortality, and meek, resigned forebodings that my father was almost angry, declaring that he would frighten himself into the sickness; yet I suppressed a good deal, and never told them of the last will and testament in which he distributed his possessions amongst us. Griff said he had a great mind to go and shake old Bill up and row him well, but he never did.

More than a week passed by, two of Clarence's regular days for writing, but no letter came. My mother grew uneasy, and talked of writing to Mrs. Robson, or, as we still called her, Gooch; but it was doubtful whether the answer would contain much information, and it was quite certain that any ill tidings would be sent to us.

At last we did hear, and found, as we had foreboded, that the letter had not been written for fear of alarming us, or carrying infection, though Clarence underlined the words 'I am perfectly well.'

Having to take a message into the senior partner's

room, Clarence had found the old man crouched over the table, writhing in the unmistakable grip of the deadly enemy. No one else was available; Clarence had to collect himself, send for the doctor, and manage the conveyance of the patient to his rooms, which fortunately adjoined the office; for, through all his influx of wealth, Mr. Frith had retained the habits and expenditure of his early struggling days. His old housekeeper and her drudge showed themselves terrified out of their senses, and as incapable as unwilling. Naval experience, and waiting on me, had taught Clarence helpfulness and handiness; and though this was the very thing that had appalled his imagination, he seemed, as he said afterwards, 'to have got beyond his fright' to the use of his common-sense. And when at last the doctor came, and talked of finding a nurse, if possible, for they were scarce articles, the sufferer only entreated between his paroxysms, 'Stay, Winslow! Is Winslow there? Don't go! Don't leave me!'

No nurse was to be found, but to Clarence's amazement Gooch arrived. He had sent by the office boy to explain his absence; and before night the faithful woman descended on him, intending, as in her old days of authority, simply to put Master Clarry out of harm's way, and take the charge upon herself. Then, as he proved unmanage-

able and would not leave his patient, neither would she leave him, and through the frightful night that ensued, there was quite employment enough for them both. Gooch fully thought the end would come before morning, and was murmuring something about a clergyman, but was cut short by a sharp prohibition. However, detecting Clarence's lips moving, the old man said, 'Eh! speak it out!' 'And with difficulty, feeling as if I were somebody else,' said Clarence, 'I did get out some short words of prayer. It seemed so awful for him to die without any.'

When the doctor came in early morning, the watchers were astonished to hear that their charge had taken a turn for the better, and might recover if their admirable care were continued. The doctor had brought a nurse; but Mr. Frith would not let her come into the room, and there was plenty of need for her elsewhere.

Several days of unremitting care followed, during which Clarence durst not write to us, so little were the laws of infection understood. Good Mrs. Robson stayed all the time, and probably saved Clarence from falling a victim to his zeal, for she looked after him as anxiously as after the sick man; and with a wondering and thankful heart, he found himself in full health, when both were set free to return home. Clarence had written at the begin-

ning of the illness to the only relations of whose existence or address he was aware, an old sister. Mrs. Stevens, and a young great-nephew in the office at Liverpool; and the consequence was the arrival of a sour-looking old widow sister, who came to take charge of the convalescence, and, as the indignant Gooch overheard her say, 'to prevent that young Winslow from getting round him.'

There were no signs of such a feat having been performed, when, the panic being past, my father went up to London with Griffith, who was to begin eating his terms at the Temple. He was to share Clarence's lodgings, for the Robsons had plenty of room, and Gooch was delighted to extend her cares to her special favourite, as she already reigned over Clarence's wardrobe and table as entirely as in nursery days; and, to my great exultation, my father said it would be good for Griffith to be with his brother; and, moreover, we should hear of the latter. Nothing could be a greater contrast than his rare notifications or requests, scrawled on a single side of the quarto sheet, with Clarence's regular weekly lines of clerkly manuscript, telling all that could interest any of us, and covering every available flap up to the blank circle left for the trim red seal.

Promotion had come to Clarence in the natural course of seniority, and a small sum, due to him on

his coming of age, was invested in the house of business, so that the two brothers could take between them all the Robsons' available rooms. Clarence's post was one of considerable trust; but there were no tokens of special favour, except that Mr. Frith was more civil to my father than usual, and when he heard of the arrangement about the lodgings, he snarled out, 'Hm! Law student indeed! Don't let him spoil his brother!'

Which was so far an expression of gratitude that it showed that he considered that there was something to be spoilt. Mr. Castleford, however, showed real satisfaction in the purchase of a share in the concern for Clarence. His own eldest son inherited a good deal of his mother's Irish nature, and was evidently unfit to be anything but a soldier, and the next was so young that he was glad to have a promising and trustworthy young man, from whom a possible joint head of the firm might be manufactured.

CHAPTER IV.

PETER'S THUNDERBOLT.

'If you can separate yourself and your misdemeanours you are welcome to the house; if not, an it would please you to take leave of her, she is very willing to bid you farewell.'—*Twelfth Night.*

In the early summer of 1833, we had the opportunity of borrowing a friend's house in Portman Square for six weeks, and we were allowed to take Ellen with us for introduction to the Admiral and other old friends, while we were to make acquaintance with her connections—the family of Sir Horace Lester, M.P.

We were very civil; but there were a good many polite struggles for the exclusive possession of Ellen, whom both parties viewed as their individual right; and her unselfish good-humour and brightness must have carried her over more worries than we guessed at the time.

She had stayed with the Lesters before, but in schoolroom days. They were indolent and uninterested, and had never shown her any of the permanent wonders of London, despising these as only fit for country cousins, whereas we had grown up

to think of them with intelligent affection. To me, however, much was as new as to Ellen. Country life had done so much for me that I could venture on what I had never attempted before. The Admiral said it was getting away from doctors and their experiments, but I had also done with the afflictions of attempts at growth in wrong directions. Old friends did not know me, and more than once, as I sat in the carriage, addressed me for one of my brothers—a compliment which, Griff said, turned my head. Happily I was too much accustomed to my own appearance, and people were too kind, for me to have much shyness on that score. Our small dinner parties were great enjoyment to me, and the two girls were very happy in their little gaieties.

Braham and Catalani, Fanny Kemble, and Turner's landscapes at his best, rise in my memory as supreme delights and revelations in their different lines, and awakening trains of thought; and then there was that entertainment which Griffith and Clarence gave us in their rooms, when they regaled us with all the delicacies of the season, and Peter and Gooch looked all pride and hospitality! The dining-parlour, or what served as such, was Griff's property, as any one could see by the pictures of horses, dogs, and ladies, the cups, whips, and boxing-gloves that adorned it; the sitting-room had tokens of other occupation, in Clarence's piano, window-box of

flowers, and his one extravagance in engravings from Raffaelle, and a marine water-colour or two, besides all my own attempts at family portraits, with a case of well-bound books. Those two rooms were perfectly redolent of their masters—I say it literally—for the scent of flowers was in Clarence's room, and in Griff's, the odour of cigars had not wholly been destroyed even by much airing. For in those days it was regarded by parents and guardians as an objectionable thing.

Peter was radiant on that occasion; but a few evenings later, when all were gone to an evening party except my father and myself, Mr. Robson was announced as wishing to speak to Mr. Winslow. After the civilities proper to the visit of an old servant had passed, he entered with obvious reluctance on the purpose of his visit, namely, his dissatisfaction with Griff as a lodger. His wife, he said, would not have had him speak, she was *that* attached to Mr. Griffith, it couldn't be more if he was her own son; nor was it for want of liking for the young gentleman on his part, as had known him from a boy, 'but the wife of one's bosom must come first, sir, as stands to reason, and it's for the good of the young gentleman himself, and his family, as some one should speak. I never said one word against it when she would not be satisfied without running the risk of her life after Mr. Clarence; hattending of

Mr. Frith in the cholery. That was only her dooty, sir, and I have never a word to say against dooty: but I cannot see her nearly wore out, and for no good to nobody.'

It appeared that Mrs. Robson was 'pretty nigh wore out, a setting up for Mr. Griffith's untimely hours.' 'He laughed and coaxed—what I calls cajoling—did Mr. Griff, to get a latch-key; but we knows our dooty too well for that, and Mrs. Winslow had made us faithfully promise, when Master Clarence first came to us, that he should never have a latch-key,—Mr. Clarence, as had only been five times later than eleven o'clock, and then he was going to dine with Mr. Castleford, or to the theayter, and spoke about it beforehand. If he was not reading to poor Miss Newton, as was gone, or with some of his language-masters, he was setting at home with his books and papers, not giving no trouble to nobody, after he had had his bit of bread and cheese and glass of beer to his supper.'

Ay, Peter knew what young gentlemen was. He did not expect to see them all like poor Master Clarence, as had had his troubles; the very life knocked out of him in his youth, as one might say. Indeed Peter would be pleased to see him a bit more sprightly, and taking more to society and hamusements of his hage. Nor would there be any objection if the late 'ours was only once a week or so,

and things was done in a style fitting the family; but when it came to mostly every night, often to two or three o'clock, it was too much for Mrs. Robson, for she would never go to bed, being mortal afraid of fire, and not always certain that Mr. Griffith was—to say—fit to put out his candle.

'What do you mean, Peter?' thundered my father, whose brow had been getting more and more furrowed every moment. 'Say it out!—Drunk?'

'Well sir, no, no, not to say that exactly, but a little excited, sir, and women is timid. No, sir, not to call intoxicated.'

'No, that's to come,' muttered my father. 'Has this often happened?'

Peter did not think that it had been noticed more than three times at the most; but he went on to offer his candid and sensible advice that Mr. Griffith should be placed in a family where there was a gentleman or lady who would have some hauthority, and could not be put aside with his good-'umoured haffability—'You're an old fogy, Peter.' 'Never mind, Nursey, I'll be a good boy next time,' and the like. 'It is a disadvantage you see, sir, to have been in his service, and 'tis for the young gentleman's own good as I speaks; but it would be better if he were somewheres else — unless you would speak to him, sir.'

To the almost needless question whether Clarence

had been with his brother on these occasions, there was a most decided negative. He had never gone out with Griffith except once to the theatre, and to dine at the Castlefords, and at first he had sat up for his return, 'but it led to words between the young gentlemen,' said Peter, whose confidences were becoming reckless; and it appeared that when Clarence had found that Gooch would not let him spare her vigil, he had obeyed her orders and ceased to share it.

Peter was thanked for the revelations, which had been a grievous effort to him, and dismissed. My father sat still in great distress and perplexity, asking me whether Clarence had ever told me anything of this, and I had barely time to answer 'No' before Clarence himself came in, from what Peter called his language-master. He was taking lessons in French and Spanish, finding a knowledge of these useful in business. To his extreme distress, my father fell on him at once, demanding what he knew of the way Griffith was spending his time, 'coming home at all sorts of hours in a disreputable condition. No prevarication, sir,' he added, as the only too familiar look of consternation and bewilderment came over Clarence's face. 'You are doing your brother no good by conniving at his conduct. Speak truth, if you can,' he added, with more cruelty than he knew, in his own suffering.

'Sir,' gasped Clarence, 'I know Griff often comes home after I am in bed, but I do not know the exact time, nor anything more.'

'Is this all you can tell me? Really all?'

'All I know—that is—of my own knowledge,' said Clarence, recovering a little, but still unable to answer without hesitation, which vexed my father.

'What do you mean by that? Do you hear nothing?'

'I am afraid,' said Clarence, 'that I do not see as much of him as I had hoped. He is not up till after I have to be at our place, and he does not often spend an evening at home. He is such a popular fellow, and has so many friends and engagements.'

'Ay, and of what sort? Can't you tell? or will you not? I sent him up to you, thinking you a steady fellow who might influence him for good.'

The colour rushed into Clarence's face, as he answered, looking up and speaking low, 'Have I not forfeited all such hopes?'

'Nonsense! You've lived down that old story long ago. You would make your mark, if you only showed a little manliness and force of character. Griffith was always fond of you. Can't you do anything to hinder him from ruining his own life and that sweet girl's happiness?'

'I would — I would give my life to do so!' exclaimed Clarence, in warm, eager tones. 'I have tried, but he says I know nothing about it, and it is very dull at our rooms for him. I have got used to it, but you can't expect a fellow like Griff to stay at home, with no better company than me, and do nothing but read law.'

'Then you *do* know,' began my father; but Clarence, with full self-possession, said, 'I think you had better ask me no more questions, papa. I really know nothing, or hardly anything, personally of his proceedings. I went to one supper with him, after going to the play, and did not fancy it; besides, it almost unfitted me for my morning's work; nor does it answer for me to sit up for him—it only vexes him, as if I were watching him.'

'Did you ever see him come home showing traces of excess?'

'No!' said Clarence, 'I never saw!' and, under a stern, distressed look, 'Once I heard tones that—that startled me, and Mrs. Robson has grumbled a good deal—but I think Peter takes it for more than it is worth.'

'I see,' said my father more gently; 'I will not press you farther. I believe I ought to be glad that these habits are only hearsay to you.'

'As far as I can see,' said Clarence diffidently,

but quite restored to himself, 'Griff is only like most of his set, young men who go into society.'

'Oh!' said my father, in a 'that's your opinion' kind of tone; and as at that moment the yell of a newsboy was heard in the street, he exclaimed that he must go and get an evening paper. Clarence made a step to go instead, but was thrust back, as apparently my father merely wanted an excuse for rushing into the open air to recover the shock or to think it over.

Clarence gave a kind of groan, and presently exclaimed, 'If only untruth were not such a sin!' and, on my exclamation of dismay, he added, 'I don't think a blowing up ever does good!'

'But this state of things should not last.'

'It will not. It would have come to an end without Peter's springing this mine. Griff says he can't stand Gooch any longer! And really she does worry him intolerably.'

'Peter professed to come without her knowledge or consent.'

'Exactly so. It will almost break the good old soul's heart for Griff to leave her; but she expects to have him in hand as if he was in the nursery. She is ever so much worse than she was with me, and he is really good-nature itself to laugh off her nagging as he does—about what he chooses to put on, or eating, or smok-

ing, or leaving his room untidy, as well as other things.'

'And those other things? Do you suspect more than you told papa?'

'It amounts to no more. Griff likes amusement, and everybody likes him—that's all. Yes, I know my father read law ten hours a day, but his whole nature and circumstances were different. I don't believe Griff could go on in that way.'

'Not with such a hope before him? You would, Clarence.'

His face and not his tongue answered me, but he added, 'Griff is sure of *that* without so much labour and trouble.'

'And do you see so little of him?'

'I can't help it. I can't keep his hours and do my work. Yes, I know we are drifting apart; I wish I could help it, but being coupled up together makes it rather worse than better. It aggravates him, and he will really get on better without Gooch to worry him, and thrust my droning old ways down his throat,—as if Prince Hal could bear to be twitted with "that sober boy, Lord John of Lancaster." Not,' he added, catching himself up, 'that I meant to compare him to the madcap Prince. He is the finest of fellows, if they only would let him alone.'

And that was all I could get from Clarence.

CHAPTER V.

A SQUIRE OF DAMES.

'Spited with a fool—
Spited and angered both.'

Cymbeline.

This long stay of Ellen's in our family had made our fraternal relations with her nearer and closer. Familiarity had been far from lessening our strong feeling for her goodness and sweetness. Emily, who knew her best, used to confide to me little instances of the spirit of devotion and self-discipline that underlay all her sunny gaiety—how she never failed in her morning's devout readings; how she learnt a verse or two of Scripture every day, and persuaded Emily to join with her in repeating it ere they went downstairs for their evening's pleasure; how she had set herself a little task of plain work for the poor, which she did every day in her own room; and the like dutiful habits, which seemed, as it were, to help her to keep herself in hand, and not be carried away by what was a whirl of pleasure

to her, though a fashionable young lady would have despised its mildness.

Indeed Lady Peacock, with whom we exchanged calls, made no secret of her compassion when she found how many parties the ladies were *not* going to; and Ellen's own relations, the Lesters, would have taken her out almost every night if she had not staunchly held to her promise to her mother not to go out more than three evenings in the week, for Mrs. Fordyce knew her to be delicate, and feared late hours for her. The vexation her cousins manifested made her feel the more bound to give them what time she could, at hours when Griffith was not at liberty. She did not like them to be hurt, and jealous of us, or to feel forsaken, and she tried to put her affection for us on a different footing by averring that 'it was not the same kind of thing—Emily was her sister.'

One day she had gone to luncheon with the Lesters in Cavendish Square, and was to be called for in the carriage by me, on the way to take up the other two ladies, who were shopping in Regent Street.

Ellen came running downstairs, with her cheeks in a glow under the pink satin lining of her pretty bonnet, and her eyes sparkling with indignation, which could not but break forth.

'I don't know how I shall ever go there again!'

she exclaimed; 'they have no right to say such things!' Then she explained. Mary and Louisa had been saying horrid things about Griffith—her Griff! It was always their way. Think how Horace had made her treat Clarence! It was their way and habit to tease, and call it fun, and she had never minded it before; but this was too bad. Would not I put it in her power to give a flat contradiction, such as would make them ashamed of themselves?

Contradict what?

Then it appeared that the Misses Lester had laughed at her, who was so very particular and scrupulous, for having taken up with a regular young man about town. Oh no, *they* did not think much of it—no doubt he was only just like other people; only the funny thing was that it should be Ellen, for whom it was always supposed that no saint in the calendar, no knight in all the Waverley novels, would be good enough! And then, on her hot desire to know what they meant, they quoted John, the brother in the Guards, as having been so droll about poor Ellen's perfect hero, and especially at his straight-laced Aunt Fordyce having been taken in,—but of course it was the convenience of joining the estates, and it was agreeable to see that your very good folk could wink at things like other people in such a case. Then, when Ellen fairly

drove her inquiries home, in her absolute trust of confuting all slanders, she was told that Griffith did, what she called 'all sorts of things—billiards and all that.' And even that he was always running after a horrid Lady Peacock, a gay widow.

'They went on in fun,' said Ellen, 'and laughed the more when—yes, I am afraid I did—I lost my temper. No, don't say I well might, I know I ought not; but I told them I knew all about Lady Peacock, and that you were all old friends, even before he rescued her from the Bristol riots and brought her home to Chantry House; and that only made Mary merrier than ever, and say, "What, another distressed damsel? Take care, Ellen; I would not trust such a squire of dames." And then Louisa chimed in, "Oh no, you see this Peacock dame was only conducted, like Princess Micomicona and all the rest of them, to the feet of his peerless Dulcinea!" And then I heard the knock, and I was never so glad in my life!'

'Well!' I could not help remarking, 'I have heard of women's spitefulness, but I never believed it till now.'

'I really don't think it was altogether what you call malice, so much as the Lester idea of fun,' said Ellen, recovering herself after her outpouring. 'A very odd notion I always thought it was; and Mary and Louisa are not really ill-natured, and cannot

wish to do the harm they might have done, if I did not know Griff too well.'

Then, after considering a little, she said, blushing, 'I believe I have told you more than I ought, Edward—I couldn't help having it out; but please don't tell any one, especially that shocking way of speaking of mamma, which they could not really mean.'

'No one could who knew her.'

'Of course not. I'll tell you what I mean to do. I will write to Mary when we go in, and tell her that I know she really cares for me enough to be glad that her nonsense has done no mischief, and, though I was so foolish and wrong as to fly into a passion, of course I know it is only her way, and I do not believe one word of it.'

Somehow, as she looked with those radiant eyes full of perfect trust, I could not help longing not to have heard Peter Robson's last night's complaint; but family feeling towards outsiders overcomes many a misgiving, and my wrath against the malignity of the Lesters was quite as strong as if I had been devoid of all doubts whether Griff wore to all other eyes the same halo of pure glory with which Ellen invested him.

Such doubts were very transient. Dear old Griff was too delightful, too bright and too brave, too ardent and too affectionate, not to dispel all

clouds by the sunshine he carried about with him. If rest and reliance came with Clarence, zest and animation came with Griffith. He managed to take the initiative by declining to remain any longer with the Robsons, saying they had been spoilt by such a model lodger as Clarence, who would let Gooch feed him on bread and milk and boiled mutton, and put on his clean pinafore if she chose to insist; whereas her indignation, when Griff found fault with the folding of his white ties, amounted to '*Et tu, Brute,*' and he really feared she would have had a fit when he ordered devilled kidneys for breakfast. He was sure her determination to tuck him up every night and put out his candle was shortening her life; and he had made arrangements to share the chambers of a friend who had gone through school and college with him. There was no objection to the friend, who had stayed at Chantry House and was an agreeable, lively, young man, well reported of, satisfactorily connected, fairly industrious, and in good society, so that Griff was likely to be much less exposed to temptation of the lower kinds than when left to his own devices, or only with Clarence, who had neither time nor disposition to share his amusements.

There was a scene with my father, but in private; and all that came to general knowledge was that Griff felt himself injured by any implication that

he was given to violent or excessive dissipation, such as could wreck Ellen's happiness or his own character.

He declared with all his heart that immediate marriage would be the best thing for both, and pleaded earnestly for it; but my father could not have arranged for it even if the Fordyces would have consented, and there were matters of business, as well as other reasons, which made it inexpedient for them to revoke their decision that the wedding should not take place before Ellen was of age and Griffith called to the bar.

So we took our young ladies home, loaded with presents for their beloved school children, of whom Emily said she dreamt, as the time for seeing them again drew near. After all the London enjoyment, it was pretty to see the girls' delight in the fresh country sights and sounds in full summer glory, and how Ellen proved to have been hungering after all her dear ones at home. When we left her at her own door, our last sight of her was in her father's arms, little Anne clinging to her dress, mother and grandfather as close to her as could be—a perfect tableau of a joyous welcome.

CHAPTER VI.

LOVE AND OBEDIENCE.

'Unless he give me all in change
I forfeit all things by him;
The risk is terrible and strange.'

MRS. BROWNING.

YOU will be weary of my lengthiness; and perhaps I am lingering too long over the earlier portion of my narrative. Something is due to the disproportion assumed in our memories by the first twenty years of existence—something, perhaps, to reluctance to passing from comparative sunshine to shadow. There was still a period of brightness, but it was so uneventful that I have no excuse for dwelling on it further than to say that Henderson, our excellent curate, had already made a great difference in the parish, and it was beginning to be looked on as almost equal to Hillside. The children were devoted to Emily, who was the source of all the amenities of their poor little lives. The needlework of the school was my mother's pride; and our church and its services, though you would shudder at them

now, were then thought presumptuously superior 'for a country parish.' They were a real delight and blessing to us, as well as to many more of the flock, who still, in their old age, remember and revere Parson Henderson as a sort of apostle.

The dawning of the new Poor-Law led to investigations which revealed the true conditions of the peasant's life—its destitution, recklessness, and dependence. We tried to mend matters by inducing families to emigrate, but this renewed the distrust which had at first beheld in the schools an attempt to enslave the children. Even accounts, sent home by the exceptionally enterprising who did go to Canada, were, we found, scarcely trusted. Amos Bell, who would have gone, if he had not been growing into my special personal attendant, was letter-writer and reader to all his relations, and revealed to us that it had been agreed that no letter should be considered as genuine unless it bore a certain private mark. To be sure, the accounts of prosperity might well sound fabulous to the toilers and moilers at home. Harriet Martineau's *Hamlets*, which we lent to many of our neighbours, is a fair picture of the state of things. We much enjoyed those tales, and Emily says they were the only political economy she ever learnt.

The model arrangements of our vestries led to a summons to my father and the younger Mr. Fordyce

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to London, to be examined on the condition of the pauper, and the working of the old Elizabethan Poor-Law.

They were absent for about a fortnight of early spring, and Emily and I could not help observing that our mother was unusually uncommunicative about my father's letters; and, moreover, there was a tremendous revolution of the furniture, a far more ominous token in our household than any comet.

The truth came on us when the two fathers returned. Mine told me himself that Frank Fordyce was so much displeased with Griffith's conduct that he had declared that the engagement could not continue with his consent.

This from good-natured, tender-hearted Parson Frank!

I cried out hotly that 'those Lesters' had done this. They had always been set against us, and any one could talk over Mr. Frank. My father shook his head. He said Frank Fordyce was not weak, but all the stronger for his gentleness and charity; and, moreover, that he was quite right—to our shame and grief be it spoken—quite right.

It was true that the first information had been given by Sir Horace Lester, Mrs. Fordyce's brother, but it had not been lightly spoken like the daughter's chatter; and my father himself had found it only

too true, so that he could not conscientiously call Griffith worthy of such a creature as Ellen Fordyce.

Poor Griff, he had been idle and impracticable over his legal studies, which no persuasion would make him view as otherwise than a sort of nominal training for a country gentleman; nor had he ever believed or acted upon the fact that the Earlscombe property was not an unlimited fortune, such as would permit him to dispense with any profession, and spend time and money like the youths with whom he associated. Still, this might have been condoned as part of the effervescence which had excited him ever since my father had succeeded to the estate, and patience might still have waited for greater wisdom; but there had been graver complaints of irregularities, which were forcing his friend to dissolve partnership with him. There was evidence of gambling, which he not only admitted, but defended; and, moreover, he was known at parties, at races, and at the theatre, as one of the numerous satellites who revolved about that gay and conspicuous young fashionable widow, Lady Peacock.

'Yes, Frank has every right to be angry,' said my father, pacing the room. 'I can't wonder at him. I should do the same; but it is destroying the best hope for my poor boy.'

Then he began to wish Clarence had more—he knew not what to call it—in him; something that

might keep his brother straight. For, of course, he had talked to Clarence and discovered how very little the brothers saw of one another. Clarence had been to look for Griff in vain more than once, and they had only really met at a Castleford dinner-party. In fact, Clarence's youthful spirits, and the tastes which would have made him companionable to Griff, had been crushed out of him; and he was what more recent slang calls 'such a muff,' that he had perforce drifted out of our elder brother's daily life, as much as if he had been a grave senior of fifty. It was, as he owned, a heavy penalty of his youthful fall that he could not help his brother more effectually.

It appeared that Frank Fordyce, thoroughly roused, had had it out with Griffith, and had declared that his consent was withdrawn and the engagement annulled. Griff, astounded at the resolute tone of one whom he considered as the most good-natured of men, had answered hotly and proudly that he should accept no dismissal except from Ellen herself, and that he had done no more than was expected of any young man of position and estate. On the other indictment he scorned any defence, and the two had parted in mutual indignation. He had, however, shown himself so much distressed at the threat of being deprived of Ellen, that neither my father nor Clarence had the least doubt of his genuine

attachment to her, nor that his attentions to Lady Peacock were more than the effect of old habit and love of amusement, and that they had been much exaggerated. He scouted the bare idea of preferring her to Ellen; and, in his second interview with my father, was ready to make any amount of promises of reformation, provided his engagement were continued.

This was on the last evening before leaving town, and he came to the coach-office looking so pale, jaded, and unhappy that Parson Frank's kind heart was touched; and in answer to a muttered 'I've been ten thousand fools, sir, but if you will overlook it I will try to be worthy of her,' he made some reply that could be construed into, 'If you keep to that, all may yet be well. I'll talk to her mother and grandfather.'

Perhaps this was cruel kindness, for, as we well knew, Mrs. Fordyce was far less likely to be tolerant of a young man's failings than was her husband; and she was, besides, a Lester, and might take the same view.

Abusing the Lesters was our great resource; for we did not believe either the sailor or the guardsman to be immaculate, and we knew them to be jealous. We had to remain in ignorance of what we most wished to know, for Ellen was kept away from us, and my mother would not let Emily go in search of

her. Only Anne, who was a high-spirited, independent little person, made a sudden rush upon me as I sat in the garden. She had no business to be so far from home alone; but, said she, 'I don't care, it is all so horrid. Please, Edward, is it true that Griff has been so very wicked? I heard the maids talking, and they said papa had found out that he was a bad lot, and that he was not to marry Ellen; but she would stick to him through thick and thin, like poor Kitty Brown who would marry the man that got transported for seven years.' 'Will he be transported, Edward? and would Ellen go too, like the "nut-brown maid?" Is that what she cries so about? Not by day, but all night. I know she does, for her handkerchief is wet through, and there is a wet place on her pillow always in the morning; but she only says, "Never mind," and nobody *will* tell me. They only say little girls should not think about such things. And I am not so very little. I am eight, and have read the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* and I know all about people in love. So you might tell me.'

I relieved Anne's mind as to the chances of transportation, and, after considering how many confidences might be honourably exchanged with the child, I explained that her father thought Griff had been idle and careless, and not fit as yet to be trusted with Ellen.

Her parish experience came into play. 'Does papa think he would be like Joe Sparks? But then gentlemen don't beat their wives, nor go to the public-house, nor let their children go about in rags.'

I durst not inquire much, but I gathered that there was a heavy shadow over the house, and that Ellen was striving to do as usual, but breaking down when alone. Just then Parson Frank appeared. Anne had run away from him while on a farming inspection, when the debate over the turnips with the factotum had become wearisome. He looked grave and sorrowful, quite unlike his usual hearty self, and came to me, leaning over my chair, and saying, 'This is sad work, Edward'; and, on an anxious venture of an inquiry for Ellen, 'Poor little maid, it is very sore work with her. She is a good child and obedient—wants to do her duty; but we should never have let it go on so long. We have only ourselves to thank—taking the family character, you see'—and he made a kindly gesture towards me. 'Your father sees how it is, and won't let it make a split between us. I believe that not seeing as much of your sister as usual is one of my poor lassie's troubles, but it may be best—it may be best.'

He lingered talking, unwilling to tear himself away, and ended by disclosing, almost at unawares, that Ellen had held out for a long time, would not understand nor take in what she was told, accepted

nothing on Lester authority, declared she understood all about Lady Peacock, and showed a strength of resistance and independence of view that had quite startled her parents, by proving how far their darling had gone from them in heart. But they still held her by the bonds of obedience; and, by dealing with her conscience, her mother had obtained from her a piteous little note—

'My dear Griffith—I am afraid it is true that you have not always seemed to be doing right, and papa and mamma forbid our going on as we are. You know I cannot be disobedient. It would not bring a blessing on you. So I must break off, though——'

The 'though' could be read through an erasure, followed by the initials, E. M. F.—as if the dismal conclusion had been felt to be only too true—and there followed the postscript, 'Forgive me, and, if we are patient, it may come right.'

This letter was displayed, when, on the ensuing evening, it brought Griff down in towering indignation, and trying to prove the coercion that must have been exercised to extract even thus much from his darling. Over he went headlong to Hillside to insist on seeing her, but to encounter a succession of stormy scenes. Mrs. Fordyce was the most resolute, but was ill for a week after. The old Rector was gentle, and somewhat overawed Griff by

his compassion, and by representations that were only too true; and Parson Frank, with his tender heart torn to pieces, showed symptoms of yielding another probation.

The interview with Ellen was granted. She, however, was intrenched in obedience. She had promised submission to the rupture of her engagement, and she kept her word,—though she declared that nothing could hinder her love, and that she would wait patiently till her lover had proved himself, to everybody's satisfaction, as good and noble as she knew him to be. When he told her she did not love him she smiled. She was sure that whatever mistakes there might have been, he would give no further occasion against himself, and then every one would see that all had been mere misunderstanding, and they should be happy again.

Such trust humbled him, and he was ready to make all promises and resolutions; but he could not obtain the renewal of the engagement, nor permission to correspond. Only there was wrung out of Parson Frank a promise that if he could come in two years with a perfectly unstained, unblotted character, the betrothal might be renewed.

We were very thankful for the hope and motive, and Griff had no doubts of himself.

'One can't look at the pretty creature and think of disappointing her,' he said. 'She is altered, you

know, Ted; they've bullied her till she is more ethereal than ever, but it only makes her lovelier. I believe if she saw me kill some one on the spot she would think it all my generosity; or, if she could not, she would take and die. Oh no! I'll not fail her. No, I won't; not if I have to spend seven years after the model of old Bill, whose liveliest pastime is a good long sermon, when it is not a ghost.'

CHAPTER VII.

UNA OR DUESSA.

> ' Soone as the Elfin knight in presence came
> And false Duessa, seeming ladye fayre,
> A gentle husher, Vanitie by name,
> Made roome, and passage did for them prepare.'
>
> SPENSER.

THE two families were supposed to continue on unbroken terms of friendship, and we men did so; but Mrs. Fordyce told my mother that she had disapproved of the probation, and Mrs. Winslow was hurt. Though the two girls were allowed to be together as usual, it was on condition of silence about Griff; and though, as Emily said, they really had not been always talking about him in former times, the prohibition seemed to weigh upon all they said.

Old Mr. Fordyce had long been talking of a round of visits among relations whom he had not seen for many years; and it was decided to send Ellen with him, chiefly, no doubt, to prevent difficulties about Griffith in the long vacation.

There was no embargo on the correspondence

with my sister, and letters full of description came regularly, but how unlike they were to our journal. They were clear, intelligent, with a certain liveliness, but no ring of youthful joy, no echo of the heart, always as if under restraint. Griff was much disappointed. He had been on his good behaviour for two months, and expected his reward, and I could not here repeat all that he said about her parents when he found she was absent. Yet, after all, he got more pity and sympathy from Parson Frank than from any one else. That good man actually sent a message for him, when Emily was on honour to do no such thing. Poor Emily suffered much in consequence, when she would neither afford Griff a blank corner of her paper, nor write even a veiled message; while as to the letters she received and gave to him, 'what was the use,' he said, 'of giving him what might have been read aloud by the town-crier?'

'You don't understand, Griff; it is all dear Ellen's conscientiousness——'

'Oh, deliver me from such con-sci-en-tious-ness,' he answered, in a tone of bitter mimicry, and flung out of the room leaving Emily in tears.

He could not appreciate the nobleness of Ellen's self-command and the obedience which was the security of future happiness, but was hurt at what he thought weak alienation. One note of sympathy

would have done much for Griff just then. I have often thought it over since, and come to the conclusion that Mrs. Fordyce was justified in the entire separation she brought about. No one can judge of the strength with which 'true love' has mastered any individual, nor how far change may be possible; and, on the other hand, unless there were full appreciation of Ellen's character, she might only have been looked on as—

> 'Puppet to a father's threat,
> Servile to a shrewish tongue.'

Yet, after all, Frank Fordyce was very kind to Griff, making himself as much of a medium of communication as he could consistently with his conscience, but of course not satisfying one who believed that the strength of love was to be proved not by obedience but disobedience.

Ellen's letters showed increasing anxiety about her grandfather, who was not favourably affected by the change of habits, consequent on a long journey, and staying in different houses. His return was fixed two or three times, and then delayed by slight attacks of illness, till at last he became anxious to get home, and set off about the end of September; but after sleeping a night at an inn at Warwick, he was too ill to proceed any farther. His old man-servant was with him; but

poor Ellen went through a great deal of suspense and responsibility before her parents reached her. The attack was paralysis, and he never recovered the full powers of mind or body, though they managed to bring him back to Hillside—as indeed his restlessness longed for his native home. When once there he became calmer, but did not rally; and a second stroke proved fatal just before Easter. He was mourned alike by rich and poor, 'He *was* a gentleman,' said even Chapman, 'always the same to rich or poor, though he was one of they Fordys.'

My father wrote to summon both his elder sons to the funeral at Hillside, and in due time Clarence appeared by the coach, but alone. He had gone to Griffith's chambers to arrange about coming down together, but found my father's letter lying unopened on the table, and learnt that his brother was supposed to be staying at a villa in Surrey, where there were to be private theatricals. He had forwarded the letter thither, and it would still be possible to arrive in time by the night mail.

So entirely was Griff expected that the gig was sent to meet him at seven o'clock the next morning, but there was no sign of him. My father and Clarence went without him to the gathering, which showed how deeply the good old man was respected and loved.

It was the only funeral Clarence had attended

except Miss Newton's hurried one, and his sensitive spirit was greatly affected. He had learnt reserve when amongst others, but I found that he had a strong foreboding of evil; he tossed and muttered in his sleep, and confessed to having had a wretched night of dreams, though he would not describe them otherwise than that he had seen the lady whose face he always looked on as a presage of evil.

Two days later the *Morning Post* gave a full account of the amateur theatricals at Bella Vista, the seat of Benjamin Bullock, Esquire, and the Lady Louisa Bullock; and in the list of *dramatis personæ*, there figured Griffith Winslow, Esquire, as Captain Absolute, and the fair and accomplished Lady Peacock as Lydia Languish.

Amateur theatricals were much less common in those days than at present, and were held as the *ne plus ultra* of gaiety. Moreover, the Lady Louisa Bullock was noted for fashionable extravagance of the semi-reputable style; and there would have been vexation enough at Griffith's being her guest, even had not the performance taken place on the very day of the funeral of Ellen's grandfather, so as to be an outrage on decorum.

At the same time, there came a packet franked by a not very satisfactory peer, brother to Lady Louisa. My father threw a note over to Clarence, and proceeded to read a very properly expressed

letter full of apologies and condolences for the Fordyces.

'He could not have got the letter in time' was my father's comment. 'When did you forward the letter? How was it addressed? Clarence, I say, didn't you hear?'

Clarence lifted up his face from his letter, so much flushed that my mother broke in—'What's the matter? A mistake in the post-town would account for the delay. Has he had the letter?'

'Oh yes.'

'Not in time—eh?'

'I'm afraid,' and he faltered, 'he did.'

'Did he or did he not?' demanded my mother.

'What does he say?' exclaimed my father.

'Sir' (always an unpropitious beginning for poor Clarence), 'I should prefer not showing you.'

'Nonsense!' exclaimed my mother: 'you do no good by concealing it!'

'Let me see his letter,' said my father, in the voice there was no gainsaying, and absolutely taking it from Clarence. None of us will ever forget the tone in which he read it aloud at the breakfast-table.

'DEAR BILL—What possessed you to send a death's-head to the feast? The letter would have bitten no one in my chambers. A nice scrape I

shall be in if you let out that your officious precision forwarded it. Of course at the last moment I could not upset the whole affair and leave Lydia to languish in vain. The whole thing went off magnificently. Keep counsel and no harm is done. You owe me that for sending on the letter.—Yours,

'J. G. W.'

Clarence had not read to the end when the letter was taken from him. Indeed to inclose such a note in a dispatch sure to be opened *en famille* was one of Griffith's haphazard proceedings, which arose from the present being always much more to him than the absent. Clarence was much shocked at hearing these last sentences, and exclaimed, 'He meant it in confidence, papa; I implore you to treat it as unread!'

My father was always scrupulous about private letters, and said, 'I beg your pardon, Clarence; I should not have forced it from you. I wish I had not seen it.'

My mother gave something between a snort and a sigh. 'It is right for us to know the truth,' she said, 'but that is enough. There is no need that they should know at Hillside what was Griffith's alternative.'

'I would not add a pang to that dear girl's grief,' said my father; 'but I see the Fordyces were

right. I shall never do anything to bring these two together again.'

My mother chimed in with something about preferring Lady Peacock and the Bella Vista crew to Ellen and Hillside, which made us rush into the breach with incoherent defence.

'I know how it was,' said Clarence. 'His acting is capital, and of course these people could not spare him, nor understand how much it signified that he should be here. They make so much of him.'

'Who do?' asked my mother. 'Lady Peacock? How do you know? Have you been with them?'

'I have dined at Mr. Clarkson's,' Clarence avowed; and, on further pressure, it was extracted that Griffith—handsome, and with talents such as tell in society—was a general favourite, and much engrossed by people who found him an enlivenment and ornament to their parties. There had been little or nothing of late of the former noisy, boyish dissipation; but that the more fashionable varieties were getting a hold on him became evident under the cross-questioning to which Clarence had to submit.

My father said he felt like a party to a falsehood when he sent Griff's letter up to Hillside, and he indemnified himself by writing a letter more indignant—not than was just, but than was prudent, especially in the case of one little accustomed to

strong censure. Indeed Clarence could not restrain a slight groan when he perceived that our mother was shut up in the study to assist in the composition. Her denunciations always outran my father's, and her pain showed itself in bitterness. 'I ought to have had the presence of mind to refuse to show the letter,' he said; 'Griff will hardly forgive me.'

Ellen looked very thin, and with a transparent delicacy of complexion. She had greatly grieved over her grandfather's illness and the first change in her happy home; and she must have been much disappointed at Griffith's absence. Emily dreaded her mention of the subject when they first met.

'But,' said my sister, 'she said no word of him. All she cared to tell me was of the talks she had with her grandfather, when he made her read his favourite chapters in the Bible; and though he had no memory for outside things, his thoughts were as beautiful as ever. Sometimes his face grew so full of glad contemplation that she felt quite awestruck, as if it were becoming like the face of an angel. It made her realise, she said, "how little the ups and downs of this life matter, if there can be such peace at the last." And, after all, I could not help thinking that it was better perhaps that Griff did not come. Any other sort of talk would have jarred on her just now, and you know he would never stand much of that.'

Much as we loved our Griff, we had come to the perception that Ellen was a treasure he could not esteem properly.

The Lester cousins, never remarkable for good taste, forced on her the knowledge of his employment. Her father could not refrain from telling us that her exclamation had been, 'Poor Griff, how shocked he must be! He was so fond of dear grandpapa. Pray, papa, get Mr. Winslow to let him know that I am not hurt, for I know he could not help it. Or may I ask Emily to tell him so?'

I wish Mrs. Fordyce would have absolved her from the promise not to mention Griff to us. That innocent reliance might have touched him, as Emily would have narrated it; but it only rendered my father more indignant, and more resolved to reserve the message till a repentant apology should come. And, alas! none ever came. Just wrath on a voiceless paper has little effect. There is reason to believe that Griff did not like the air of my father's letter, and never even read it. He diligently avoided Clarence, and the pain and shame his warm heart must have felt only made him keep out of reach.

CHAPTER VIII.

FACILIS DESCENSUS.

> ' The slippery verge her feet beguiled ;
> She tumbled headlong in.'
>
> GRAY.

ONE of Griffith's briefest notes in his largest hand announced that he had accepted various invitations to country houses, for cricket matches, archery meetings, and the like ; nor did he even make it clear where his address would be, except that he would be with a friend in Scotland when grouse-shooting began.

Clarence, however, came home for a brief holiday. He was startled at the first sight of Ellen. He said she was indeed lovelier than ever, with an added sweetness in her clear eyes and the wild rose flush in her delicate cheek ; but that she looked as if she was being refined away to nothing, and was more than ever like the vision with the lamp.

Of course the Fordyces had not been going into society, though Ellen and Emily were as much together as before, helping one another in practising

their school children in singing, and sharing in one another's studies and pursuits. There had been in the spring a change at Wattlesea; the old incumbent died, and the new one was well reported of as a very earnest hardworking man. He seemed to be provided with a large family, and there was no driving into Wattlesea without seeing members of it scattered about the place.

The Fordyces being anxious to show them attention without a regular dinner-party, decided on inviting all the family to keep Anne's ninth birthday, and Emily and Martyn were of course to come and assist at the entertainment.

It was on the morning of the day fixed that a letter came to me whose contents seemed to burn themselves into my brain. Martyn called across the breakfast-table, 'Look at Edward! Has any one sent you a young basilisk?'

'I wish it was,' I gasped out.

'Don't look so,' entreated Emily. 'Tell us! Is it Griff?'

'Not ill—hurt?' cried my mother.

'Oh no, no. Worse!' and then somehow I articulated that he was married; and Clarence exclaimed, 'Not the Peacock!' and at my gesture my father broke out. 'He has done for himself, the unhappy boy. A disgraceful Scotch marriage. Eh?'

'It was his sense of honour,' I managed to utter.

'Sense of fiddlestick!' said my poor father. 'Don't stop to excuse him. We've had enough of that! Let us hear.'

I cannot give a copy of the letter. It was so painful that it was destroyed; for there was a tone of bravado betraying his uneasiness, but altogether unbecoming. All that it disclosed was, that some one staying in the same house had paid insulting attentions to Lady Peacock; she had thrown herself on our brother's protection, and after interfering on her behalf, he had found that there was no means of sheltering her but by making her his wife. This had been effected by the assistance of the lady of the house where they had been staying; and Griffith had written to me two days later from Edinburgh, declaring that Selina had only to be known to be loved, and to overcome all prejudices.

'Prejudices,' said my father bitterly. 'Prejudices in favour of truth and honour.'

And my mother uttered the worst reproach of all, when in my agitation, I slipped and almost fell in rising—'Oh, my poor Edward! that I should have lived to think yours the least misfortune that has befallen my sons!'

'Nay, mother,' said Clarence, putting Martyn toward her, 'here is one to make up for us all.'

'Clarence,' said my father, 'your mother did not

mean anything but that you and Edward are the comfort of our lives. I wish there were a chance of Griffith redeeming the past as you have done; but I see no hope of that. A man is never ruined till he is married.'

At that moment there was a step in the hall, a knock at the door, and there stood Mr. Frank Fordyce. He looked at us and said, 'It is true then.'

'To our shame and sorrow it is,' said my father. 'Fordyce, how can we look you in the face?'

'As my dear good friend, and my father's,' said the kind man, shaking him by the hand heartily. 'Do you think we could blame you for this youth's conduct? Stay'—for we young ones were about to leave the room. 'My poor girl knows nothing yet. Her mother luckily got the letter in her bedroom. We can't put off the Reynoldses, you know, so I came to ask the young people to come up as if nothing had happened, and then Ellen need know nothing till the day is over.'

'If I can,' said Emily.

'You can be capable of self-command, I hope,' said my mother severely, 'or you do not deserve to be called a friend.'

Such speeches might not be pleasant, but they were bracing, and we all withdrew to leave the elders to talk it over together, when, as I believe,

kind Parson Frank was chiefly concerned to argue my parents out of their shame and humiliation.

Clarence told us what he knew or guessed; and we afterwards understood the matter to have come about chiefly through poor Griff's weakness of character, and love of amusement and flattery. The boyish flirtation with Selina Clarkson had never entirely died away, though it had been nothing more than the elder woman's bantering patronage and easy acceptance of the youth's equally gay, jesting admiration. It had, however, involved some raillery on his attachment to the little Methodistical country girl, and this gradually grew into jealousy of her—especially as Griff became more of a man, and a brilliant member of society. The detention from the funeral had been a real victory on the widow's part, and the few times when Clarence had seen them together he had been dismayed at the *cavaliere serviente* terms on which Griff seemed to stand; but his words of warning were laughed down. The rest was easy to gather. He had gone about on the round of visits almost as an appendage to Lady Peacock, till they came to a free and easy house, where her coquetry and love of admiration brought on one of those disputes which rendered his championship needful; and such defence could only have one conclusion, especially in Scotland, where hasty private marriages were still legal. What an exchange!

Only had Griff ever comprehended the worth of his treasure ?

Emily went as late as she could, that there might be the less chance of a tête-à-tête, in which she might be surprised into a betrayal of her secret ; indeed she only started at last when Martyn's impatience had become intolerable.

What was our amazement when, much earlier than we expected, we saw Mr. Fordyce driving up in his phaeton, and heard the story he had to tell.

Emily's delay had succeeded in bringing her only just in time for the luncheon that was to be the children's dinner. There was a keen-looking, active, sallow clergyman, grizzled, and with an air of having seen much service ; a pale, worn wife, with a gentle, sensible face ; and a bewildering flock of boys and girls, all apparently under the command of a very brisk, effective-looking elder sister of fourteen or fifteen, who seemed to be the readiest authority, and to decide what and how much each might partake of, among delicacies, evidently rare novelties.

The day was late in August. The summer had broken ; there had been rain, and, though fine, the temperature was fitter for active sports than anything else. Croquet was not yet invented, and, besides, most of the party were of the age for regular games at play. Ellen and Emily did their part in starting

these—finding, however, that the Reynolds boys were rather rough, in spite of the objurgations of their sister, who evidently thought herself quite beyond the age for romps. The sports led them to the great home-field on the opposite slope of the ridge from our own. The new farm-buildings were on the level ground at the bottom to the right, where the declivity was much more gradual than to the left, which was very steep, and ended in furze bushes and low copsewood. It was voted a splendid place for hide-and-seek, and the game was soon in such full career that Ellen, who had had quite running enough, could fall out of it, and with her, the other two elder girls. Emily felt Fanny Reynolds' presence a sort of protection, 'little guessing what she was up to,' to use her own expression. Perhaps the girl had not earlier made out who Emily was, or she had been too much absorbed in her cares; but, as the three sat resting on a stump overlooking the hill, she was prompted by the singular inopportuneness of precocious fourteen to observe, 'I ought to have congratulated you, Miss Winslow.'

Emily gabbled out, 'Thank you, never mind,' hoping thus to put a stop to whatever might be coming; but there was no such good fortune. 'We saw it in the paper. It is your brother, isn't it?'

'What?' asked unsuspicious Ellen, thinking, no doubt, of some fresh glory to Griffith.

And before Emily could utter a word, if there were any she could have uttered, out it came. 'The marriage—John Griffith Winslow, Esquire, eldest son of John Edward Winslow of Chantry House, to Selina, relict of Sir Henry Peacock and daughter of George Clarkson, Esquire, Q.C. I didn't think it could be you at first, because you would have been at the wedding.'

Emily had not even time to meet Ellen's eyes before they were startled by a shriek that was not the merry 'whoop' and 'I spy' of the game, and, springing up, the girls saw little Anne Fordyce rushing headlong down the very steepest part of the slope, just where it ended in an extremely muddy pool, the watering-place of the cattle. The child was totally unable to stop herself, and so was Martyn, who was dashing after her. Not a word was said, though, perhaps, there was a shriek or two, but the elder sisters flew with one accord towards the pond. They also were some way above it, but at some distance off, so that the descent was not so perpendicular, and they could guard against over-running themselves. Ellen, perhaps from knowing the ground better, was far before the other two; but already poor little Anne had gone straight down, and fallen flat on her face in the water, Martyn after her, perhaps with a little more free will, for, though he too fell, he was already struggling to lift

Anne up, and had her head above water, when Ellen arrived and dashed in to assist.

The pond began by being shallow, but the bottom sloped down into a deep hollow, and was besides covered several feet deep with heavy cattle-trodden mire and weeds, in which it was almost impossible to gain a footing, or to move. By the time Emily and Miss Reynolds had come to the brink, Ellen and Martyn were standing up in the water, leaning against one another, and holding poor little Anne's head up—all they could do. Ellen called out, 'Don't! don't come in! Call some one! The farm! We are sinking in—— You can't help! Call——'

The danger was really terrible of their sinking in the mud and weeds, and being sucked into the deep part of the pool, and they were too far in to be reached from the bank. Emily perceived this, and ran as she had never run before, happily meeting on the way with the gentlemen, who had been inspecting the new model farm-buildings, and had already taken alarm from the screams.

They found the three still with their heads above water, but no more, for every struggle to get up the slope only plunged them deeper in the horrible mud. Moreover, Fanny Reynolds was up to her ankles in the mud, holding by one of her brothers, but unable to reach Martyn. It seems she had

had some idea of forming a chain of hands to pull the others out.

Even now the rescue was not too easy. Mr. Fordyce hurried in, and took Anne in his arms; but, even with his height and strength, he found his feet slipping away under him, and could only hand the little insensible girl to Mr. Reynolds, bidding him carry her at once to the house, while he lifted Martyn up only just in time, and Ellen clung to him. Thus weighted, he could not get out, till the bailiff and another man had brought some faggots and a gate that were happily near at hand, and helped him to drag the two out, perfectly exhausted, and Martyn hardly conscious. They both were carried to the Rectory,—Ellen by her father, Martyn by the foreman,—and they were met at the door by the tidings that little Anne was coming to herself.

Indeed, by the time Mr. Fordyce had put on dry clothes, all three were safe in warm beds, and quite themselves again, so that he trusted that no mischief was done; though he decided upon fetching my mother to satisfy herself about Martyn. However, a ducking was not much to a healthy fellow like Martyn, and my mother found him quite fit to dress himself in the clothes she brought, and to return home with her. Both the girls were asleep, but Ellen had had a shivering fit, and her mother was with her, and was anxious. Emily told her

mother of Fanny Reynolds' unfortunate speech, and it was thought right to mention it. Mrs. Fordyce listened kindly, kissed Emily, and told her not to be distressed, for possibly it might turn out to have been the best thing for Ellen to have learnt the fact at such a moment; and, at any rate, it had spared her parents some doubt and difficulty as to the communication.

CHAPTER IX.

WALY, WALY.

'And am I then forgot, forgot?
It broke the heart of Ellen!'

CAMPBELL.

CLARENCE and Martyn walked over to Hillside the first thing the next morning to inquire for the two sisters. As to one, they were quickly reassured, for Anne was in the porch feeding the doves, and no sooner did she see them than out she flew, and was clinging round Martyn's neck, her hat falling back as she kissed him on both cheeks, with an eagerness that made him, as Clarence reported, turn the colour of a lobster, and look shy, not to say sheepish, while she exclaimed, 'Oh, Martyn! mamma says she never thanked you, for you really and truly did save my life, and I am so glad it was you——'

'It was not I, it was Ellen,' gruffly muttered Martyn.

'Oh yes! but papa says I should have been smothered in that horrid mud, before Ellen could get to me if you had not pulled me up directly.'

The elders came out by this time, and Clarence was able to get in his inquiry. Ellen had had a feverish night, and her chest seemed oppressed, but her mother did not think her seriously ill. Once she had asked, 'Is it true, what Fanny Reynolds said?' and on being answered, 'Yes, my dear, I am afraid it is,' she had said no more; and as the Fordyce habit of treating colds was with sedatives, her mother thought her scarcely awake to the full meaning of the tidings, and hoped to prevent her dwelling on them till she had recovered the physical shock. Having answered these inquiries, the two parents turned upon Martyn, who, in an access of shamefacedness, had crept behind Clarence and a great orange-tree, and was thence pulled out by Anne's vigorous efforts. The full story had come to light. The Reynolds' boys had grown boisterous as soon as the restraint of the young ladies' participation had been removed, and had, whether intentionally or not, terrified little Anne in the chases of hide-and-seek. Finally, one of them had probably been unable to withstand the temptation of seeing her timid nervous way of peeping and prying about; and had, without waiting to be properly found, leapt out of his lair with a roar that scared the little girl nearly out of her wits, and sent her flying, she knew not whither. Martyn was a few steps behind, only not holding her hand, because the other children had derided

her for clinging to his protection. He had instantly seen where she was going, and shouted to her to stop and take care; but she was past attending to him, and he had no choice but to dart after her, seeing what was inevitable; while George Reynolds had sense to stop in time, and seek a safer descent. Had Martyn not been there to raise the child instantly from the stifling mud, her sister could hardly have been in time to save her.

Mrs. Fordyce tearfully kissed him; her husband called him a little hero, as if in joke, then gravely blessed him; and he looked, Clarence related, as if he had been in the greatest possible disgrace.

It was the second time that one of us had saved a life from drowning, but there was none of the exultation we had felt that time before in London. It was a much graver feeling, where the danger had really been greater, and the rescue had been of one so dear to us. It was tempered likewise by anxiety about our dear Ellen—ours, alas, no longer! She was laid up for several days, and it was thought better that she should not see Emily till she had recovered; but after a week had passed, her father drove over to discuss some plans for the Poor-Law arrangements, and begged my sister to go back in the carriage and spend the day with his daughter.

We brothers could now look forward to some

real intelligence; we became restless; and in the afternoon Clarence and I set out with the donkey-chair on the woodland path to meet Emily. We gained more than we had hoped, for as we came round one of the turns in the winding path, up the hanging beech-wood, we came on the two friends—Ellen, a truly Una-like figure, in her white dress with her black scarf making a sable stole. Perhaps we betrayed some confusion, for there was a bright flush on her cheeks as she came towards us, and, standing straight up, said, 'Clarence, Edward, I am so glad you are here; I wanted to see you. I wanted—to say—I know he could not help it. It was his generosity—helping those that need it; and—and—I'm not angry. And though that's all over, you'll always be my brothers, won't you?'

She held her outstretched hands to us both. I could not help it, I drew her down, and kissed her brow; Clarence clasped her other hand and held it to his lips, but neither of us could utter a word.

She turned back and went quietly away through the wood, while Emily sank down under the beech-tree in a paroxysm of grief. You may see which it was, for Clarence cut out 'E. M. F., 1835' upon the bark. He soothed and caressed poor Emily as in old nursery troubles; and presently she told us that it would be long before we saw that dear one again,

for Mrs. Fordyce was going to take her away on the morrow.

Mrs. Fordyce had seen Emily in private, before letting her go to Ellen. There was evidently a great wish to be kind. Mrs. Fordyce said she could never forget what she owed to us all, and could not think of blaming any of us. 'But,' she said, 'you are a sensible girl, Emily,'—'how I hate being called a sensible girl,' observed the poor child, in parenthesis, —'and you must see that it is desirable not to encourage her to indulge in needless discussion after she once understands the facts.' She added that she thought a cessation of present intercourse would be wise till the sore was in some degree healed. She had not been satisfied about her daughter's health for some time, and meant to take her to Bath the next day to consult a physician, and then decide what would be best. 'And, my dear,' she said, 'if there should be a slackening of correspondence, do not take it as unkindness, but as a token that my poor child is recovering her tone. Do not discontinue writing to her, but be guarded, and perhaps less rapid, in replying.'

It was for her friendship that poor Emily wept so bitterly—the first friendship that had been an enthusiasm to her; looking at it as a cruel injustice that Griff's misdoing should separate them. The prediction that all might be lived down

and forgotten was too vague and distant to be much consolation; indeed, we were too young to take it in.

We had it all over again in a somewhat grotesque form when, at another turn in the wood, we came upon Martyn and Anne, loaded with treasures from their robbers' cave, some of which were bestowed in my chair, the others carried off between Anne and her not very willing nursery-maid.

Anne kissed us all round, and augured cheerfully that she should lay up a store of shells and rocks by the seaside to make 'a perfect Robinson Crusoe cavern,' she said, 'and then Clarence can come and be the Spaniards and the savages. But that won't be till next summer,' she added, shaking her head. 'I shall get Ellen to tell Emily what shells I find, and then she can tell Martyn; for mamma says girls never write to boys unless they are their brothers! And now Martyn will never be my brother,' she added ruefully.

'You will always be our darling,' I said.

'That's not the same as your sister,' she answered. However, amid auguries of the combination of robbers and Robinson Crusoe, the parting was effected, and Anne borne off by the maid; while we had Martyn on our hands, stamping about and declaring that it was very hard that because Griff chose to be a faithless, inconstant ruffian, all his pleasure and

comfort in life should be stopped! He said such outrageous things that, between scolding him and laughing at him, Emily had been somewhat cheered by the time we reached the house.

My father had written to Griffith, in his first displeasure, curt wishes that he might not have reason to repent of the step he had taken, though he had not gone the right way to obtain a blessing. As it was not suitable that a man should be totally dependent on his wife, his allowance should be continued; but under present circumstances he must perceive that he and Lady Peacock could not be received at Chantry House. We were shown the letter, and thought it terribly brief and cold; but my mother said it would be weak to offer forgiveness that was not sought, and my father was specially exasperated at the absence of all contrition as to the treatment of Ellen. All Griff had vouchsafed on that head was—the rupture had been the Fordyces' doing; he was not bound. As to intercourse with him, Clarence and I might act as we saw fit.

'Only,' said my father, as Clarence was leaving home, 'I trust you not to get yourself involved in this set.'

Clarence gave a queer smile, 'They would not take me as a gift, papa.'

And as my father turned from the hall door,

he laid his hand on his wife's arm, and said, 'Who would have told us what that young fellow would be to us?'

She sighed, and said, 'He is not twenty-three; he has plenty of money, and is very fond of Griff.'

CHAPTER X.

THE RIVER'S BANK.

'And my friend rose up in the shadows,
And turned to me,
"Be of good cheer," I said faintly,
For He called thee.'—B. M.

Mr. Fordyce waited at Hillside till after Sunday, and then went to Bath to hear the verdict of the physician. He returned as much depressed as it was in his sanguine nature to be, for great delicacy of the lungs had been detected; and to prevent the recent chill from leaving permanent injury, Ellen must have a winter abroad, and warm sea or mountain air at once. Whether the disease were constitutional and would have come on at all events no one could tell.

Consumption was much less understood half a century ago; codliver oil was unknown; and stethoscopes were new inventions, only used by the more advanced of the faculty. The only escape poor Parson Frank had from accepting the doom was in disbelieving that a thing like a trumpet

could really reveal the condition of the chest. Moreover, Mrs. Fordyce had had a brother who had, under the famous cowhouse cure, recovered enough to return home, and be killed by the upsetting of a stage coach.

Mrs. Fordyce took her daughter to Lyme, and waited there till her husband had found a curate and made all arrangements. It must have been very inconvenient not to come home; but, no doubt, she wanted to prevent any more partings. Then they went abroad, travelling slowly, and seeing all the sights that came in their way, to distract Ellen's thoughts. She was not allowed to hear what ailed her; but believed her languor and want of interest in everything to be the effect of the blow she had received, struggling to exert herself, and to enter gratefully into the enjoyments provided for her. She was not prevented from writing to Emily; indeed, no one liked to hinder anything she wished, but they were guide-book letters, describing all she saw as a kind of duty, but scarcely concealing the trouble it was to look. Such sentences would slip out as 'This is a nice quiet place, and I am happy to say there is nothing that one ought to see.' Or, 'I sat in the cathedral at Lucerne while the others were going round. The organ was playing, and it was such rest!' Or, again, after a day on the Lago di Como, 'It was glorious, and if you

and Edward were here, perhaps the beauty would penetrate my sluggish soul!'

Ellen's sluggish soul!—when we remembered her keen ecstasy at the Valley of Rocks.

Those letters were our chief interest in an autumn which seemed dreary to us, in spite of friendly visitors; for had not our family hope and joy been extinguished? There was no direct communication with Griffith after his unpleasant reply to my father's letter; but Clarence saw the newly married pair on their return to Lady Peacock's house in London, and reported that they were very kind and friendly to him, and gave him more invitations than he could accept. Being cross-examined when he came home for Christmas, he declared his conviction that Lady Peacock had married Griff entirely from affection, and that he had been—well—flattered into it. They seemed very fond of each other now, and were launching out into all sorts of gaieties; but though he did not tell my father, he confided to me that he feared that Griffith had been disappointed in the amount of fortune at his wife's disposal.

It was at that Christmas time, one night, having found an intrusive cat upon my bed, Clarence carried her out at the back door close to his room, and came back in haste and rather pale. 'It is quite true about the lady and the light being seen

out of doors,' he said in an awe-stricken voice, 'I have just seen her flit from the mullion room to the ruin.'

We only noted the fact in that ghost-diary of ours—we told nobody, and looked no more. We already believed that these appearances on the lawn must be the cause that every window, up to the attics on the garden side of the house, were so heavily shuttered and barred that there was no opening them without noise. Indeed, those on the ground floor had in addition bells attached to them. No doubt the former inhabitants had done their best to prevent any one from seeing or inquiring into what was unacknowledged and unaccountable. It might be only a coincidence, but we could not help remarking that we had seen and heard nothing of her during the engagement which might have united the two families; though, of course, it would be ridiculous to suppose her cognisant of it, like the White Lady of Avenel, dancing for joy at Mary's marriage with Halbert Glendinning.

The Fordyces had settled at Florence, where they suffered a great deal more from cold than they would have done at Hillside; and there was such a cessation of Ellen's letters that Emily feared that Mrs. Fordyce had attained her wish and separated the friends effectually. However, Frank Fordyce

beguiled his enforced leisure with long letters to my father on home business, Austrian misgovernment, and the Italian Church and people, full of shrewd observations and new lights; and one of these ended thus, 'My poor lassie has been in bed for ten days with a severe cold. She begs me to say that she has begun a letter to Emily, and hopes soon to finish it. We had thought her gaining ground, but she is sadly pulled down. *Fiat voluntas.*'

The letter, which had been begun, never came; but, after three long weeks, there was one from the dear patient herself, mentioning her illness, and declaring that it was so comfortable to be allowed to be tired, and to go nowhere and see nothing except the fragment of beautiful blue sky, and the corner of a campanile, and the flowers Anne brought in daily.

As soon as she could be moved, they took her to Genoa, where she revived enough to believe that she should be well if she were at home again, and to win from her parents a promise to take her to Hillside as soon as the spring winds were over. So anxious was she that, as soon as there was any safety in travelling, the party began moving northwards, going by sea to Marseilles to avoid the Corniche, so early in the year. There were many fluctuations, and it was only her earnest yearning

for home and strong resolution that could have made her parents persevere; but at last they were at Hillside, just after Whitsuntide, in the last week of May.

Frank Fordyce walked over to see us on the very evening after their arrival. He was much altered, his kindly handsome face looked almost as if he had gone through an illness; and, indeed, apart from all his anxiety and sorrow, he had pined in foreign parts for his human flock, as well as his bullocks and his turnips. He had also read, thought, and observed a great deal, and had left his long boyhood behind him, during a space for study and meditation such as he had never had before.

He was quite hopeless of his daughter's recovery, and made no secret of it. In passing through London the best advice had been taken, but only to obtain the verdict that the case was beyond all skill, and that it was only a matter of weeks, when all that could be done was to give as much gratification as possible. The one thing that Ellen did care about was to be at home—to have Emily with her, and once more see her school children, her church, and her garden. Tired as she was she had sprung up in the carriage at the first glimpse of Hillside spire, and had leant forward at the window, nodding and smiling her greetings to all the villagers.

She had been taken at once to her room and her bed, but her father had promised to beg Emily to come up by noon on the morrow. Then he sat talking of local matters, not able to help showing what infinite relief it was to him to be at home, and what music to his ears was the Somersetshire dialect and deep English voice 'after all those thin, shrill, screeching foreigners.'

Poor Emily! It was in mingled grief and gladness that she set off the next day, with the trepidation of one to whom sickness and decay were hitherto unknown. When she returned, it was in a different mood, unable to believe the doctors could be right, and in the delight of having her own bright, sweet Ellen back again, all herself. They had talked, but more of home and village than of foreign experiences; and though Ellen did not herself assist, she had much enjoyed watching the unpacking of the numerous gifts which had cost a perfect fortune at the Custom House. No one seemed forgotten—villagers, children, servants, friends. Some of these tokens are before me still. The Florentine mosaic paper-weight she brought me presses this very sheet; the antique lamp she gave my father is on the mantelpiece; Clarence's engraving of Raffaelle's St. Michael hangs opposite to me on the wall. Most precious in our eyes was the collection of plants, dried and labelled by herself, which she brought to Emily and me—

poor mummies now, but redolent of undying affection. Her desire was to bestow all her keepsakes with her own hands, and in most cases she actually did so—a few daily, as her strength served her. The little figures in costume, coloured prints, Swiss carvings, French knicknacks, are preserved in many a Hillside cottage as treasured relics of 'our young lady.' Many years later, Martyn recognised a Hillside native in a back street in London by a little purple-blue picture of Vesuvius, and thereby reached the soft spot in a nearly dried-up heart.

So bright and playful was the dear girl over all her old familiar interests that we inexperienced beings believed not only that the wound to her affections was healed, but that she either did not know or did not realise the sentence that had been pronounced on her; but when this was repeated to her mother, it was met by a sad smile and the reply that we only saw her in her best hours. Still, through the summer, it was impossible to us to accept the truth; she looked so lovely, was so cheerful, and took such delight in all that was about her.

With the first cold, however, she seemed to shrivel up, and the bad nights extended into the days. Emily ascribed the change to the lack of going out into the air, and always found reasons for the increased languor and weakness; till at last there came a day when my poor little sister seemed as if

the truth had broken upon her for the first time, when Ellen talked plainly to her of their parting, and had asked us both, 'her dear brother and sister,' to be with her at her Communion on All Saints' Day.

She had written a little letter to Clarence, begging his forgiveness for having cut him, and treated him with the scorn which, I believe, was the chief fault that weighed upon her conscience; and, hearing my father's voice in the house, she sent a message to beg him to come and see her in her mother's dressing-room—that very window where I had first heard her voice, refusing to come down to 'those Winslows.' She had sent for him to entreat him to forgive Griffith and recall the pair to Chantry House. 'Not now,' she said, 'but when I am gone.'

My father could deny her nothing, though he showed that the sight of her made the entreaty all the harder to him; and she pleaded, 'But you know this was not his doing. I never was strong, and it had begun before. Only think how sad it would have been for him.'

My father would have promised anything with that wasted hand on his, those fervent eyes gazing on him, and he told her he would have given his pardon long ago, if it had been sought, as it never had been.

'Ah! perhaps he did not dare!' she said. 'Won't

you write when all this is over, and then you will be one family again as you used to be?'

He promised, though he scarcely knew where Griffith was. Clarence, however, did. He had answered Ellen's letter, and it had made him ask for a few days' leave of absence. So he came down on the Saturday, and was allowed a quarter of an hour beside Ellen's sofa in the Sunday evening twilight. He brought away the calm, rapt expression I had sometimes seen on his face at church, and Ellen made a special entreaty that he might share the morrow's feast.

There are some things that cannot be written of, and that was one. Still we had not thought the end near at hand, though on Tuesday morning a message was sent that Ellen was suffering and exhausted, and could not see Emily. It was a wild, stormy day, with fierce showers of sleet, and we clung to the hope that consideration for my sister had prompted the message. In the afternoon Clarence battled with a severe gale, made his way to Hillside, and heard that the weather affected the patient, and that there was much bodily distress. For one moment he saw her father, who said in broken accents that we could only pray that the spirit might be freed without much more suffering, 'though no doubt it is all right.'

Before daylight, before any one in the house was

up, Clarence was mounting the hill in the gusts that had done their work on the trees and were subsiding with the darkness. And just as he was beginning the descent, as the sun tipped the Hillside steeple with light, he heard the knell, and counted the twenty-one for the years of our Ellen—for ours she will always be.

'Somehow,' he told me, 'I could not help taking off my hat and giving thanks for her, and then all the drops on all the boughs began sparkling, and there was a hush on all around as if she were passing among the angels, and a thrush broke out into a regular song of jubilee!'

CHAPTER XI.

NOT IN VAIN.

'Then cheerly to your work again,
With hearts new braced and set
To run untired love's blessed race,
As meet for those who face to face
Over the grave their Lord have met.'

KEBLE.

THAT dying request could not but be held sacred, and overtures were made to Griffith, who returned an odd sort of answer, friendly and affectionate, but rather as if my father were the offending party in need of forgiveness. He and his wife were obliged for the invitation, but could not accept it, as they had taken a house near Melton-Mowbray for the hunting season, and were entertaining friends.

In some ways it was disappointing, in others it was a relief, not to have the restraint of Lady Peacock's presence during the last days we were to have with the Fordyces. For a fresh loss came upon us. Beachharbour was a fishing-village on the north-western coast, which, within the previous decade, had sprung into importance, on the one hand

as a fashionable resort, on the other as a minor port for colliers. The living was wretchedly poor, and had been held for many years by one of the old inferior stamp of clergy, scarcely superior in habits or breeding to the farmers, and only outliving the scandals of his youth to fall into a state of indolent carelessness. It was in the gift of a child, for whom Sir Horace Lester was trustee, and that gentleman had written, about a fortnight before Ellen's death, to consult Mr. Fordyce on its disposal, declaring the great difficulties and deficiencies of the place, which made it impossible to offer it to any one without considerable private means, and also able to attract and improve the utterly demoralised population. He ended, almost in joke, by saying, 'In fact, I know no one who could cope with the situation but yourself; I wish you could find me your own counterpart, or come yourself in earnest. It is just the air that suits my sister—bracing sea-breezes; the parsonage, though a wretched place, is well situated, and she would be all the stronger; but in poor Ellen's state there is no use in talking of it, and besides I know you are wedded to your fertile fields and Somersetshire clowns.'

That letter (afterwards shown to us) had worked on Mr. Fordyce's mind during those mournful days. He was still young enough to leave behind him Parson Frank and the 'squarson' habits of Hillside

in which he had grown up; and the higher and more spiritual side of his nature had been fostered by the impressions of the last year. He was conscious, as he said, that his talk had been overmuch of bullocks, and that his farm had engrossed him more than he wished should happen again, though a change would be tearing himself up by the roots; and as to his own people at Hillside, the curate, an active young man, had well supplied his place, and, in his *truly* humble opinion, though by no means in theirs, introduced several improvements even in that model parish.

What had moved him most, however, was a conversation he had had with Ellen, with whom during this last year he had often held deep and serious counsel, with a growing reverence on his side. He had read her uncle's letter to her, and to his great surprise found that she looked on it as a call. Devotedly fond as she herself was of Hillside, she could see that her father's abilities were wasted on so small a field, in a manner scarcely good for himself, and she had been struck with the greater force of his sermons when preaching to educated congregations abroad. If no one else could or would take efficient charge of these Beachharbour souls, she could see that it would weigh on his conscience to take comparative ease in his own beloved meadows, among a flock almost his vassals. Moreover, she

relieved his mind about her mother. She had discovered, what the good wife kept out of sight, that the north-country woman never could entirely have affinities with the south, and she had come to the conclusion that Mrs. Fordyce's spirits would be heavily tried by settling down at Hillside in the altered state of things.

After this talk, Mr. Fordyce had suggested a possible incumbent to his brother-in-law, but left the matter open; and when Sir Horace came down to the funeral, it was more thoroughly discussed; and, as soon as Mrs. Fordyce saw that departure would not break her husband's heart, she made no secret of the way that both her opinion and her inclinations lay. She told my mother that she had always believed her own ill-health was caused by the southern climate, and that she hoped that Anne would grow up stronger than her sister in the northern breezes.

Poor little Anne! Of all the family, to her the change was the greatest grief. The tour on the Continent had been a dull affair to her; she was of the age to weary of long confinement in the carriage and in strange hotels, and too young to appreciate 'grown-up' sights. Picture-galleries and cathedrals were only a drag to her, and if the experiences that were put into Rosella's mouth for the benefit of her untravelled sisters could have been written down,

they would have been as unconventional as Mark Twain's adventures. Rosella went through the whole tour, and left a leg behind in the hinge of a door, but in compensation brought home a Paris bonnet and mantle. She seemed to have been her young mistress's chief comfort, next to an occasional game of play with her father, or a walk, looking in at the shop windows and watching marionettes, or, still better, the wonderful sports of brown-legged street children, without trying to make her speak French or Italian—in her eyes one of the inflictions of the journey, in those of her elders the one benefit she might gain. She had missed the petting to which she had been accustomed from her grandfather and from all of us; and she had absolutely counted the days till she could get home again, and had fallen into dire disgrace for fits of crying when Ellen's weakness caused delays. Martyn's holidays had been a time of rapture to her, for there was no one to attend much to her at home, and she was too young to enter into the weight of anxiety; so the two had run as wild together as a gracious well-trained damsel of ten and a fourteen-year-old boy with tender chivalry awake in him could well do. To be out of the way was all that was asked of her for the time, and all old delights, such as the robbers' cave, were renewed with fresh zest.

'It was the sweetest and the last.'

And though Martyn was gone back to school, the child felt the wrench from home most severely. As she told me on one of those sorrowful days, 'She did think she had come back to live at dear, dear little Hillside all the days of her life.' Poor child, we became convinced that this vehement attachment to Griffith's brothers was one factor in Mrs. Fordyce's desire to make a change that should break off these habits of intimacy and dependence.

Pluralities had not become illegal, and Frank Fordyce, being still the chief landholder in Hillside, and wishing to keep up his connection with his people, did not resign the rectory, though he put the curate into the house, and let the farm. Once or twice a year he came to fulfil some of a landlord's duties, and was as genial and affectionate as ever, but more and more absorbed in the needs of Beachharbour, and unconsciously showing his own growth in devotion and activity; while he brought his splendid health and vigour, his talent, his wealth, and, above all, his winning charm of manner and address, to that magnificent work at Beachharbour, well known to all of you; though, perhaps, you never guessed that the foundation of all those churches and their grand dependent works of piety, mercy, and beneficence was laid in one young girl's grave. I never heard of a fresh achievement there without remembering how the funeral psalm ends with—

> ' Prosper Thou the work of our hands upon us,
> O prosper Thou our handiwork.'

And Emily? Her drooping after the loss of her friend was sad, but it would have been sadder but for the spirit Ellen had infused. We found the herbs to heal our woe round our pathway, though the first joyousness of life had departed. The reports Mr. Henderson and the Hillside curate brought from Oxford were great excitements to us, and we thought and puzzled over church doctrine, and tried to impart it to our scholars. We, I say, for Henderson had made me take a lads' class, which has been the chief interest of my life. Even the roughest were good to their helpless teacher, and some men, as gray-headed as myself, still come every Sunday to read with Mr. Edward, and are among the most faithful friends of my life.

CHAPTER XII.

GRIFF'S BIRD.

'Shall such mean little creatures pretend to the fashion?
Cousin Turkey Cock, well may you be in a passion.'
The Peacock at Home.

It was not till the second Christmas after dear Ellen Fordyce's death that my eldest brother brought his wife and child to Chantry House, after an urgent letter to Lady Peacock from my mother, who yearned for a sight of Griffith's boy.

I do not wish to dwell on that visit. Selina, or Griff's bird, as Martyn chose to term her, was certainly handsome and stylish; but her complexion had lost freshness and delicacy, and the ladies said her colour was rouge, and her fine figure due to other female mysteries. She meant to be very gracious, and patronised everybody, especially Emily, who, she said, would be quite striking if not sacrificed by her dress, and whom she much wished to take to London, engaging to provide her with a husband before the season was over, not for a moment believing my mother's assurance that it would be a

trial to us all whenever we had to resign our Emily. Nay, she tried to condole with the poor moped family slave, and was received with such hot indignation as made her laugh, for, to do her justice, she was good-natured and easy-tempered. However, I saw less of her than did the others, for I believe she thought the sight of me made her ill. Griff, poor old fellow, was heartily glad to be with us again, but quite under her dominion. He had lost his glow of youth and grace of figure, his complexion had reddened, and no one would have guessed him only a year older than Clarence, whose shoulders did indeed reveal something of the desk, but whose features, though pale, were still fair and youthful. The boy was another Clarence, not so much in compliment to his godfather as because it was the most elegant name in the family, and favoured an interesting belief, current among his mother's friends, that the king had actually stood sponsor to the uncle. Poor little man, his grandmother shut herself into the bookroom and cried, after her first sight of him. He was a wretched, pinched morsel of humanity, though mamma and Emily detected wonderful resemblances; I never saw them, but then he inherited his mother's repulsion towards me, and roared doubly at the sight of me. My mother held that he was the victim of Selina's dissipations and mismanagement of herself and him, and gave many

matronly groans at his treatment by the smart, flighty nurse, who waged one continual warfare with the household.

Accustomed to absolute supremacy in domestic matters, it was very hard for my mother to have her counsels and experience set at naught, and, if she appealed to Griff, to find her notions treated with the polite deference he might have shown to a cottage dame.

A course of dinner-parties could not hinder her ladyship from finding Chantry House insufferably dull, 'always like Sunday;' and, when she found that we were given to Saints' Day services, her pity and astonishment knew no bounds. 'It was all very well for a poor object like Edward,' she held, 'but as to Mr. Winslow and Clarence, did they go for the sake of example? Though, to be sure, Clarence might be a Papist any day.'

Popery, instead of Methodism, was just beginning to be the bugbear set up for those whom the world held to be ultra-religious, and my mother was so far disturbed at our interest in what was termed Oxford theology that the warning would have alarmed her if it had come from any other quarter. However, Lady Peacock was rather fond of Clarence, and entertained him with schemes for improving Chantry House when it should have descended to Griffith. The mullion rooms were her special aver-

sion, and were all to be swept away, together with the vaultings and the ruin—'enough to give one the blues, if there were nothing else,' she averred.

We really felt it to the credit of our country that Sir George Eastwood sent an invitation to an early dance to please his young daughters; and for this our visitors prolonged their stay. My mother made Clarence go, that she might have some one to take care of her and Emily, since Griff was sure to be absorbed by his lady. Emily had not been to a ball since those gay days in London with Ellen. She shrank back from the contrast, and would have begged off; but she was told that she must submit; and though she said she felt immeasurably older than at that happy time, I believe she was not above being pleased with the pale pink satin dress and wreath of white jessamine, which my father presented to her, and in which, according to Martyn, she beat 'Griff's bird all to shivers.'

Clarence had grown much less bashful and embarrassed since the Tooke affair had given him a kind of position and a sense of not being a general disgrace. He really was younger in some ways at five-and-twenty than at eighteen; he enjoyed dancing, and especially enjoyed the compliments upon our sister, whom in our usual fashion we viewed as the belle of the ball. He was standing by my fire, telling me the various humours of the

night, when a succession of shrieks ran through the house. He dashed away to see what was the matter, and returned, in a few seconds, saying that Selina had seen some one in the garden, and neither she nor mamma would be satisfied without examination —'though, of course, I know what it must be,' he added, as he drew on his coat.

'Bill, are you coming?' said Griff at the door. 'You needn't, if you don't like it. I bet it is your old friend.'

'I'm coming! I'm coming! I'm sure it is,' shouted Martyn from behind, with the inconsistent addition, 'I've got my gun.'

'Enough to dispose of any amount of robbers or phantoms either,' observed Griff, as they went forth by the back door, reinforced by Amos Bell with a lantern in one hand and a poker in the other.

My father was fortunately still asleep, and my mother came down to see whether I was frightened. She said she had no patience with Selina, and had left her to Emily and her maid; but, before many words had been spoken, they all came creeping down after her, feeling safety in numbers, or perhaps in her entire fearlessness. The report of a gun gave us all a shock, and elicited another scream or two. My mother, hoping that no one was hurt, hastened into the hall, but only to meet Griff, hurrying in laughing to reassure us with the tidings that it was

only Martyn, who had shot the old sun-dial by way of a robber; and he was presently followed by the others, Martyn rather crestfallen, but arguing with all his might that the sun-dial was exactly like a man; and my mother hurried every one off upstairs without further discussion.

Clarence was rather white, and when Martyn demanded, 'Do you really think it was the ghost? Fancy her selection of the bird!' he gravely answered, 'Martyn, boy, if it were, it is not a thing to speak of in that tone. You had better go to bed.'

Martyn went off, somewhat awed. Clarence was cold and shivering, and stood warming himself. He was going to wind up his watch, but his hand shook, and I did it for him, noting the hour—twenty minutes past one.

It appeared that Selina, on going upstairs, recollected that she had left her purse in Griff's sitting-room before going to dress, and had gone in quest of it. She heard strange shouts and screams outside, and, going to one of the old windows, where the shutters were less unmanageable than elsewhere, she beheld a woman rushing towards the house pursued by at least a couple of men. Filled with terror she had called out, and nearly fainted in Griff's arms.

'It agrees with all we have heard before,' said Clarence, 'the very day and hour!'

'As Martyn said, the person is strange.'

'Villagers, less concerned, have seen the like,' he said; 'and, indeed, all unconsciously poor Selina has cut away the hope of redress,' he sighed. 'Poor, restless spirit! would that I could do anything for her.'

'Let me ask, do you ever see her now?'

'N—no, I suppose not; but whenever I am anxious or worried, the trouble takes her form in my dreams.'

Lady Peacock had soon extracted the ghost story from her husband, and, though she professed to be above the vulgar folly of belief in it, her nerves were so upset, she said, that nothing would have induced her to sleep another night in the house. The rational theory on this occasion was that one of the maids must have stolen out to join in the Christmas entertainment at the Winslow Arms, and been pursued home by some tipsy revellers; but this explanation was not productive of goodwill between the mother and daughter-in-law, since mamma had from the first so entirely suspected Selina's smart nurse as actually to have gone straight to the nursery on the plea of seeing whether the baby had been frightened. The woman was found asleep—apparently so—said my mother, but all her clothes were in an untidy heap on the floor, which to my mother was proof conclusive that she had slipped

into the house in the confusion, and settled herself there. Had not my mother with her own eyes watched from the window her flirtations with the gardener, and was more evidence requisite to convict her? Mamma entertained the hope that her proposal would be adopted of herself taking charge of her grandson, and fattening his poor little cheeks on our cows' milk, while the rest of the party continued their round of visits.

Lady Peacock, however, treated it as a personal imputation that *her* nurse should be accused instead of any servant of Mrs. Winslow's own, though, as Griff observed, not only character, but years and features might alike acquit them of any such doings; but even he could not laugh long, for it was no small vexation to him that such offence should have arisen between his mother and wife. Of course there was no open quarrel—my mother had far too much dignity to allow it to come to that—but each said in private bitter things of the other, and my lady's manner of declining to leave her baby at Chantry House was almost offensive.

Poor Griffith, who had been growing more like himself every day, tried in vain to smooth matters, and would have been very glad to leave his child to my mother's management, though, of course, he acquitted the nurse of the midnight adventure. He privately owned to us that he had no opinion of

the woman, but he defended her to my mother, in whose eyes this was tantamount to accusing her own respectable maids, since it was incredible that any rational person could accept the phantom theory.

Gladly would he have been on better terms, for he had had to confess that his wife's fortune had turned out to be much less than common report had stated, or than her style of living justified, and that his marriage had involved him in a sea of difficulties, so that he had to beg for a larger allowance, and for assistance in paying off debts.

The surrender of the London house and of some of the chief expenses were made conditions of such favours, and Griffith had assented gratefully when alone with his father; but after an interview with his wife, demonstrations were made that it was highly economical to have a house in town, and horses, carriages, and servants and that any change would be highly derogatory to the heir of Earlscombe and the sacred wishes of the late Sir Henry Peacock.

In fact, it was impressed on us that we were mere homely, countrified beings, who could not presume to dictate to her ladyship, but who had ill requited her condescension in deigning to beam upon us.

CHAPTER XIII.

SLACK WATER.

'O dinna look, ye prideful queen, on a' aneath your ken,
For he wha seems the farthest *but* aft wins the farthest *ben*,
And whiles the doubie of the schule tak's lead of a' the rest:
The birdie sure to sing is the gorbal of the nest.

'The cauld, grey, misty morn aft brings a sunny summer day;
The tree wha's buds are latest is longest to decay;
The heart sair tried wi' sorrow still endures the sternest test:
The birdie sure to sing is the gorbal of the nest.

'The wee wee stern that glints in heaven may be a lowin' sun,
Though like a speck of light it seem amid the welkin dun;
The humblest sodger on the field may win a warrior's crest:
The birdie sure to sing is the gorbal of the nest.'

Scotch Newspaper.

THE wickedness of the nurse was confirmed in my mother's eyes when the doom on the first-born of the Winslows was fulfilled, and the poor little baby, Clarence, succumbed to a cold on the chest caught while his nurse was gossiping with a guardsman.

He was buried in London. 'It was better for Selina to get those things over as quickly as possible,' said Griff; but Clarence saw that he suffered much

more than his wife would let him show to her. 'It is so bad for him to dwell on it,' she said. 'You see, I never let myself give way.'

And she was soon going out, nearly as usual, till their one other infant came to open its eyes only for a few hours on this troublesome world, and owe its baptism to Clarence's exertions. My mother, who was in London just after, attending on the good old Admiral's last illness, was greatly grieved and disgusted with all she heard and saw of the young pair, and that was not much. She felt their disregard of her uncle as heartless, or rather as insulting, on Selina's part, and weak on Griff's; and on all sides she heard of their reckless extravagance, which made her forebode the worst.

All these disappointments much diminished my father's pleasure and interest in his inheritance. He had little heart to build and improve, when his eldest son's wife made no secret of her hatred to the place, or to begin undertakings only to be neglected by those who came after; and thus several favourite schemes were dropped, or prevented by Griffith's applications for advances.

At last there was a crisis. At the end of the second season after their visit to us, Clarence sent a hasty note, begging my father to join him in averting an execution in Griffith's house. I cannot record the particulars, for just at that time I had a

long low fever, and did not touch my diary for many weeks; nor indeed did I know much about the circumstances, since my good nurses withheld as much as possible, and would not let me talk about what they believed to make me worse. Nor can I find any letters about it. I believe they were all made away with long ago, and thus I only know that my father hurried up to town, remained for a fortnight, and came back looking ten years older. The house in London had been given up, and he had offered a vacant one of our own, near home, to Griff to retrench in, but Selina would not hear of it, insisting on going abroad.

This was a great grief to him and to us all. There was only one side of our lives that was not saddened. Our old incumbent had died about six months after the Fordyces had gone, and Mr. Henderson had gladly accepted the living where the parsonage had been built. The lady to whom he had been so long engaged was a great acquisition. Her home had been at Oxford; and she was as thoroughly imbued with the spirit that there prevailed as was the Hillside curate. She talked to us of Littlemore, and of the sermons there and at St. Mary's, and Emily and I shared to the full her hero-worship. It was the nearest compensation my sister had had for the loss of Ellen, with this difference, that Mrs. Henderson was older, had read more, and

had conversed thoughtfully with some of the leading spirits in religious thought, so that she opened a new world to us.

People would hardly believe in our eagerness and enthusiasm over the revelations of church doctrine; how we debated, consulted our books, and corresponded with Clarence over what now seems so trite; how we viewed the *British Critic* and *Tracts for the Times* as our oracles, and worried the poor Wattlesea bookseller to get them for us at the first possible moment.

Church restoration was setting in. Henderson had always objected to christening from a slop-basin on the altar, and had routed out a dilapidated font; and now one, which was termed by the country paper chaste and elegant, was by united efforts, in which Clarence had the lion's share, presented in time for the christening of the first child at the Parsonage. It is that which was sent off to the Mission Chapel as a blot on the rest of Earlscombe Church. Yet what an achievement it was deemed at the time!

The same may be said of most of our doings at that era. We effected them gradually, and have ever since been undoing them, as our architectural and ecclesiastical perceptions have advanced. I wonder how the next generation will deal with our alabaster reredos and our stained windows, with

which we are all as well pleased as we were fifty years ago with the plain red cross with a target-like arrangement above and below it in the east window, or as poor Margaret may have been with her livery altar-cloth. Indeed, it seems to me that we got more delight out of our very imperfect work, designed by ourselves and sent to Clarence to be executed by men in back streets in London, costing an immensity of trouble, than can be had now by simply choosing out of a book of figures of cut and dried articles.

What an enthusiastic description Clarence sent of the illuminated commandments in the new Church of St. Katharine in the Regent's Park! How Emily and I gloated over the imitation of them when we replaced the hideous old tables, and how exquisite we thought the initial I, which irreverent youngsters have likened, with some justice, to an enormous overfed caterpillar, enwreathed with red and green cabbage leaves!

My mother was startled at these innovations; but my father, who had kept abreast with the thought of the day, owned to the doctrines as chiming in with his unbroken belief, and transferred to the improvements in the church the interest which he had lost in the estate. The farmers had given up their distrust of him, and accepted him loyally as friend and landlord, submitting to the reseating of the church,

and only growling moderately at decorations that cost them nothing. Daily service began as soon as Henderson was his own master, and was better attended than it is now; for the old people to whom it was a novelty took up the habit more freely than their successors, to whom the bell has been familiar through their days of toil. We were too far off to be constant attendants; but evensong made an object for our airings, and my father's head, now quite white, was often seen there. He felt it a great relief amid the cares of his later years.

Perhaps it was with a view to him that Mr. Castleford arranged that Clarence should become manager for the firm at Bristol, with a good salary. The Robsons would not take a fresh lodger—they were getting too old for fresh beginnings; but they kept their rooms ready for him, whenever he had to be in town, and Gooch found him a trustworthy widow as housekeeper. He took a little cottage at Clifton, availing himself of the coach to spend his Sundays with us; and it was an acknowledged joy to every one that I should drive to meet him every Saturday afternoon at the Carpenter's Arms, and bring him home to be my father's aid in all his business, and a most valuable help in Sunday parish work, in which he had an amount of experience which astonished us.

What would have become of the singing without

him? The first hint against the remarkable anthems had long ago alienated our tuneful choir placed on high, and they had deserted *en masse*. Then Emily and the schoolmistress had toiled at the school children, whose thin little pipes and provincialisms were a painful infliction, till Mrs. Henderson, backed by Clarence, worked up a few promising men's voices to support them. We thought everything but the New and Old Versions smacked of dissent, except the hymns at the end of the Prayer-book, though we did not go as far as Chapman, who told Emily he understood as how all the tunes was tried over in Doctor's Commons afore they were sent out, and it was not 'liable' to change them. One of Clarence's amusements in his lonely life had been the acquisition of a knowledge of music, and he had a really good voice; while his adherence to our choir encouraged other young men of the farmer and artisan class to join us. Choir, however, did not mean surplices and cassocks, but a collection of our best voices, male and female, in the gallery.

Martyn began to be a great help when at home, never having wavered in his purpose of becoming a clergyman. On going to Oxford, he became imbued with the influences that made Alma Mater the focus of the religious life and progress of that generation which is now the elder one. There

might in some be unreality, in others extravagance, in others mere imitation; but there was a truly great work on the minds of the young men of that era—a work which has stood the test of time, made saints and martyrs, and sown the seed whereof we have witnessed a goodly growth, in spite of cruel shocks and disappointments, fightings within and fears without, slanders and follies to provoke them, such as we can now afford to laugh over. With Martyn, rubrical or extra-rubrical observances were the outlet of the exuberance of youth, as chivalry and romance had been to us; and on Frank Fordyce's visits, it was delightful to find that he too was in the full swing of these ideas and habits, partly from his own convictions, partly from his parish needs, and partly carried along by curates fresh from Oxford.

In the first of his summer vacations Martyn joined a reading party, with a tutor of the same calibre, and assured them that if they took up their quarters in a farmhouse not many miles by the map from Beachharbour, they would have access to unlimited services, with the extraordinary luxury of a surpliced choir, and intercourse with congenial spirits, which to him meant the Fordyces.

On arriving, however, the bay proved to be so rocky and dangerous that there was no boating across it, as he had confidently expected. The

farm depended on a market town in the opposite direction, and though the lights of Beachharbour could be seen at night, there was no way thither except by a six-miles walk along a cliff path, with a considerable détour in order to reach a bridge and cross the rapid river which was an element of danger in the bay, on the north side of the promontory which sheltered the harbour to the south.

So when Martyn started as pioneer on the morning before the others arrived, he descended into Beachharbour later than he intended, but still he was in time to meet Anne Fordyce, a tall, bright-faced girl of fourteen, taking her after-lessons turn on the parade with a governess, who looked amazed as the two met, holding out both hands to one another, with eager joy and welcome.

It was not the same when Anne flew into the Vicarage with the rapturous announcement, 'Here's Martyn!' The vicar was gone to a clerical meeting, and Mrs. Fordyce said nothing about staying to see him. The luncheon was a necessity, but with quiet courtesy Martyn was made to understand that he was regarded as practically out of reach, and 'Oh, mamma, he could come and sleep,' was nipped in the utterance by 'Martyn is busy with his studies; we must not disturb him.' This was a sufficient intimation that Mrs. Fordyce did not intend to have the pupils dropping in on her

continually, and making her house their resort; and while Martyn was digesting the rebuff, the governess carried Anne off to prepare for a music lesson, and her mother gave no encouragement to lingering or repeating the visit.

Still Martyn, on his way homewards, based many hopes on the return of Mr. Fordyce; but all that ensued was, three weeks later, a note regretting the not having been able to call, and inviting the whole party to a great school-feast on the anniversary of the dedication of the first of the numerous new churches of Beachharbour. There was no want of cordiality on that occasion, but time was lacking for anything beyond greetings and fleeting exchanges of words. Parson Frank tried to talk to Martyn, bemoaned the not seeing more of him, declared his intentions of coming to the farm, began an invitation, but was called off a hundred ways; and Anne was rushing about with all the children of the place, gentle and simple, on her hands. Whenever Martyn tried to help her, he was called off some other way, and engaged at last in the hopeless task of teaching cricket where these fisher boys had never heard of it.

That was all he saw of our old friends, and he was much hurt by such ingratitude. So were we all, and though we soon acquitted the head of the family of more than the forgetfulness of over

occupation, the soreness at his wife's coldness was not so soon passed over. Yet from her own point of view, poor woman, she might be excused for a panic lest her second daughter might go the way of the first.

CHAPTER XIV.

OUTWARD BOUND.

'As slow our ship her foamy track
Against the wind was cleaving,
Her trembling pennant still looked back
To the dear isle 'twas leaving.
So loath we part from all we love,
From all the links that bind us,
So turn our hearts as on we rove
To those we've left behind us.'

T. Moore.

The first time I saw Clarence's *ménage* was in that same summer of poor Martyn's repulse. My father had come in for a small property in his original county of Shropshire, and this led to his setting forth with my mother to make necessary arrangements, and then to pay visits to old friends; leaving Emily and me to be guests to our brother at Clifton.

We told them it was their harvest honeymoon, and it was funny to see how they enjoyed the scheme when they had once made up their minds to it, and our share in the project was equally new and charming, for Emily and I, though both some way on in our twenties, were still in many

respects home children, nor had I ever been out on a visit on my own account. The yellow chariot began by conveying Emily and me to our destination.

Clifton has grown considerably since those days, and terraces have swallowed up the site of what the post-office knew as Prospect Cottage, but we were apt to term the doll's house, for, as Emily said, our visit there had something the same effect as a picnic or tea drinking at little Anne's famous baby house. In like manner, it was tiny, square, with one sash-window on each side of the door, but it was nearly covered with creepers, odds and ends which Clarence brought from home, and induced to flourish and take root better than their parent stocks. In his nursery days his precision had given him the name of 'the old bachelor,' and he had all a sailor's tidiness. Even his black cat and brown spaniel each had its peculiar basket and mat, and had been taught never to transgress their bounds or interfere with one another; and the effect of his parlour, embellished as it was in our honour, was delightful. The outlook was across the beautiful ravine, into the wooded slopes on the further side, and, on the other side, down the widening cleft to that giddy marvel, the suspension bridge, with vessels passing under it, and the expanse beyond.

Most entirely we enjoyed ourselves, making merry over Clarence's housekeeping, employing ourselves after our wonted semi-student, semi-artist fashion in the morning; and, when our host came home from business, starting on country expeditions, taking a carriage whenever the distance exceeded Emily's powers of walking beside my chair; sketching, botanising, or investigating church architecture, our newest hobby. I sketched, and the other two rambled about, measuring and filling up archæological papers, with details of orientation, style, and all the rest, deploring barbarisms and dilapidations, making curious and delightful discoveries, pitying those who thought the Dun Cow's rib and Chatterton's loft the most interesting features of St. Mary's Redcliff, and above all rubbing brasses with heel ball, and hanging up their grim effigies wherever there was a vacant space on the walls of our doll's house.

And though we grumbled when Clarence was detained at the office later than we expected, this was qualified by pride at feeling his importance there as a man in authority. It was, however, with much dismay and some inhospitality that we learnt that a young man belonging to the office—in fact, Mr. Frith's great-nephew—was coming to sail for Canton in one of the vessels belonging to the firm, and would have to be 'looked after.'

He could not be asked to sleep at Prospect Cottage, for Emily had the only spare bedchamber, and Clarence had squeezed himself into a queer little dressing closet to give me his room; but the housekeeper (a treasure found by Gooch) secured an apartment in the next house, and we were to act hosts, much against our will. Clarence had barely seen the youth, who had been employed in the office at Liverpool, living with his mother, who was in ill-health and had died in the last spring. The only time of seeing him, he had seemed to be a very shy raw lad; but, 'poor fellow, we can make the best of him,' was the sentiment; 'it is only for one night.' However, we were dismayed when, as Emily was in the crisis of washing-in a sky, it was announced that a gentleman was asking for Mr. Winslow. Churlishness bade us despatch him to the office, but humanity prevailed to invite him previously to share our luncheon. Yet we doubted whether it had not been a cruel mercy when he entered, evidently unprepared to stumble on a young lady and a deformed man, and stammering piteously as he hoped there was no mistake—Mr. Winslow—Prospect, etc.

Emily explained, frustrating his desire to flee at once to the office, and pointing out his lodging, close at hand, whence he was invited to return in a few minutes to the meal.

We had time for some amiable exclamations, 'The oaf!' 'What a bore!' 'He has spoilt my sky!' 'I shan't finish this to-day!' 'Shall we order a carriage and take him to the office; we can't have him on our hands all the afternoon?' 'And we might get the new number of *Nicholas Nickleby*.'

N.B.—Perhaps it was *Oliver Twist* or *The Old Curiosity Shop*—I am not certain which was the current excitement just then; but I am quite sure it was Mrs. Nickleby who first disclosed to us that our guest had a splendid pair of dark eyes. Hitherto he had kept them averted in the studious manner I have often noticed in persons who did not wish to excite suspicion of staring at my peculiarities; but that lady's feelings when her neighbour's legs came down her chimney were too much for his self-consciousness, and he gave a glance that disclosed dark liquid depths, sparkling with mirth. He was one number in advance of us, and could enlighten us on the next stage in the coming story; and this went far to reconcile us to the invasion, and to restore him to the proper use of his legs and arms—and very shapely limbs they were, for he was a slim, well-made fellow, with a dark gipsy complexion, and intelligent, honest face, altogether better than we expected.

Yet we could have groaned when in the evening,

Clarence brought him back with tidings that something had gone wrong with the ship. If I tried to explain, I might be twitted with,

'The bowsprit got mixed with the rudder sometimes.'

But of course Clarence knew all about it, and he thought it unlikely that the vessel would be in sailing condition for a week at soonest. Great was our dismay! Getting through one evening by the help of walking and then singing was one thing, having the heart of our visit consumed by an interloper was another; though Clarence undertook to take him to the office and find some occupation for him that might keep him out of our way. But it was Clarence's leisure hours that we begrudged; though truly no one could be meeker than this unlucky Lawrence Frith, nor more conscious of being an insufferable burthen. I even detected a tear in his eye when Clarence and Emily were singing 'Sweet Home.'

'Do you know,' said Clarence, on the second evening, when his guest had gone to dress for dinner, 'I am very sorry for that poor lad. It is only six weeks since he lost his mother, and he has not a soul to care for him, either here or where he is going. I had fancied the family were under a cloud, but I find it was only that old Frith quarrelled with the father for taking Holy Orders instead of going into

our house. Probably there was some imprudence; for the poor man died a curate and left no provision for his family. The only help the old man would give was to take the boy into the office at Liverpool, stopping his education just as he was old enough to care about it. There were a delicate mother and two sisters then, but they are all gone now; scarlet fever carried off the daughters, and Mrs. Frith never was well again. He seems to have spent his time in waiting on her when off duty, and to have made no friends except one or two contemporaries of hers; and his only belongings are old Frith and Mrs. Stevens, who are packing him off to Canton without caring a rap what becomes of him. I know what Mrs. Stevens is at; she comes up to town much oftener now, and has got her husband's nephew into the office, and is trying to get everything for him; and that's the reason she wants to keep up the old feud, and send this poor Lawrence off to the ends of the earth.'

'Can't you do anything for him?' asked Emily. 'I thought Mr. Frith did attend to you.'

Clarence laughed. 'I know that Mrs. Stevens hates me like poison; but that is the only reason I have for supposing I might have any influence.'

'And can't you speak to Mr. Castleford?'

'Set him to interfere about old Frith's relations! He would know better! Besides, the fellow is too

old to get into any other line—four-and-twenty he says, though he does not look it; and he is as innocent as a baby, indifferent just now to what becomes of him, or whither he goes; it is all the same to him, he says; there is no one to care for him anywhere, and I think he is best pleased to go where it is all new. And there, you see, the poor lad will be left to drift to destruction—mother's darling that he has been—just for want of some human being to care about him, and hinder his getting heartless and reckless!'

Clarence's voice trembled, and Emily had tears in her eyes as she asked if absolutely nothing could be done for him. Clarence meant to write to Mr. Castleford, who would no doubt beg the chaplain at the station to show the young man some kindness; also, perhaps, to the resident partner, whom Clarence had looked at once over his desk, but in his rawest and most depressed days. The only clerk out there, whom he knew, would, he thought, be no element of safety, and would not like the youth the better either for bringing his recommendation or bearing old Frith's name.

We were considerably softened towards our guest, though the next time Emily came on him he was standing in the hall, transfixed in contemplation of her greatest achievement in brass-rubbing, a severe and sable knight with the most curly of nostrils, the

stiffest and straightest of mouths, hair straight on his brows, pointed toes joined together below, and fingers touching over his breast. There he hung in triumph just within the front door, fluttering and swaying a little on his pins whenever a draught came in; and there stood Lawrence Frith, freshly aware of him, and unable to repress the exclamation, 'I say! isn't he a guy?'

'Sir Guy de Warrenne,' began Emily composedly; 'don't you see his coat of arms? "chequy argent and azure."'

'Does your brother keep him there to scare away the tramps?'

Emily's countenance was a study.

The subject of brasses was unfolded to Lawrence Frith, and before the end of the week he had spent an entire day on his hands and knees, scrubbing away with the waxy black compound at a figure in the Cathedral—the office-work, as we declared, which Clarence gave him to do. In fact he became so thoroughly infected that it was a pity that he was going where there would be no exercise in ecclesiology—rather the reverse. Embarrassment on his side, and hostility on ours, may be said to have vanished under the influence of Sir Guy de Warrenne's austere countenance. The youth seemed to regard 'Mr. Winslow' in the light of a father, and to accept us as kindly beings. He

ceased to contort his limbs in our awful presence, looked at me like as an ordinary person, and even ventured on giving me an arm. He listened with unfeigned pleasure to our music, perilled his neck on St. Vincent's rocks in search of plants, and by and by took to hanging back with Emily, while Clarence walked on with me, to talk to her out of his full heart about his mother and sisters.

Three weeks elapsed before the *Hoang-ho* was ready to sail, and by that time Lawrence knew that there were some who would rejoice in his success, or grieve if things went ill with him. Clarence and I had promised him long home letters, and impressed on him that we should welcome his intelligence of himself. For verily he had made his way into our hearts, as a thoroughly good-hearted, affectionate being, yearning for something to cling to; intelligent and refined, though his recent cultivation had been restricted, soundly principled, and trained in religious feelings and habits, but so utterly inexperienced that there was no guessing how it might be with him when cast adrift, with no object save his own maintenance, and no one to take an interest in him.

Clarence talked to him paternally, and took him to second-hand shops to provide a cheap library of substantial reading, engaging to cater for him for the future, not omitting Dickens; and Emily

worked at providing him with the small conveniences and comforts for the voyage that called for a woman's hand. He was so grateful that it was like fitting out a dear friend or younger brother.

'I wonder,' said Clarence, as he walked by my chair on one of the last days, 'whether it was altogether wise to have this young Frith here so much, though it could hardly have been helped.'

To which I rejoined that it could hardly have displeased the uncle, and that if it did, the youth's welfare was worth annoying him for.

'I meant something nearer home,' said Clarence, and proceeded to ask if I did not think Lawrence Frith a good deal smitten with Emily.

To me it seemed an idea not worth consideration. Any youth, especially one who had lived so secluded a life, would naturally be taken by the first pleasing young woman who came in his way, and took a kindly interest in him; but I did not think Emily very susceptible, being entirely wrapped up in home and parish matters; and I reminded Clarence that she had not been loverless. She had rejected the Curate of Hillside; and we all saw, though she did not, that only her evident indifference kept Sir George Eastwood's second son from making further advances.

Clarence was not convinced. He said he had never seen our sister look at either of these as she

did when Lawrence came into the room; and there was no denying that there was a soft and embellishing light on her whole countenance, and a fresh sweetness in her voice. But then he seemed such a boy as to make the notion ridiculous; and yet, on reckoning, it proved that their years were equal. All that could be hoped was that the sentiment, if it existed, would not discover itself before they parted, so as to open their eyes to the dreariness of the prospect, and cause our mother to think we had betrayed our trust in the care of our sister. As we could do nothing, we were not sorry that this was the last day. Clarence was to go on board with Frith, see him out of the river, and come back with the pilot; and we all drove down to the wharf together; nobody saying much by the way, except the few jerky remarks we brothers felt bound to originate and reply to.

Emily sat very still, her head bent under her shading bonnet—I think she was trying to keep back tears for the solitary exile; and Lawrence, opposite, was unable to help watching her with wistful eyes, which would have revealed all, if we had not guessed it already. It might be presumptuous, but it made us very sorry for him.

When the moment of parting came, there was a wringing of hands, and, 'Thank you, thank you,' in a low, broken, heartfelt voice, and to Emily,

'You have made life a new thing to me. I shall never forget,' and the showing of a tiny book in his waistcoat pocket.

When the two had disappeared, Emily, no longer restraining her tears, told me that she had exchanged Prayer-books with him, and they were to read the Psalms at the same time every day. 'I thought it might be a help to him,' she said simply.

Nor was there any consciousness in her talk as she related to me what he had told her about his mother and sisters, and his dreary sense of piteous loneliness, till we had adopted him as a brother—in which capacity I trusted that she viewed him.

However, Clarence had been the recipient of all the poor lad's fervent feelings for Miss Winslow, how she had been a new revelation to his desolate spirit, and was to be the guiding star of his life, etc. etc., all from the bottom of his heart, though he durst not dream of requital, and was to live, not on hope, but on memory of the angelic kindness of these three weeks.

It was impossible not to be touched, though we strove to be worldly wise old bachelors, and assured one another that the best and most probable thing that could happen to Lawrence Frith would be to have his dream blown away by the Atlantic breezes, and be left open to the charms of some Chinese merchant's daughter.

CHAPTER XV.

TOO LATE.

> 'Thus Esau-like, our Father's blessing miss,
> Then wash with fruitless tears our faded crown.'
>
> KEBLE.

AFTER such a rebuff as Martyn had experienced at Beachharbour, he no longer haunted its neighbourhood, but devoted the long vacation of the ensuing year to a walking tour in Germany, with one or two congenial spirits, who shared his delight in scenery, pictures, and architecture.

By and by he wrote to Clarence from Baden Baden—

'Whom do you think I should find here but Griffith and his bird? I first spotted the old fellow smoking under a tree in the Grand Platz, but he looked so seedy and altered altogether that I was not sure enough of him to speak, especially as he showed no signs of knowing me. (He says it was my whiskers that stumped him.) I made inquiries and found that they figured as "Sir Peacock and lady," but they were entered all right

in the book. He is taking the "Kür"—he looks as if he wanted it—and she is taking *rouge et noir*. I saw her at the salon, with her neck grown as long as her namesake's, but not as pretty, claws to match, thin and painted, as if the ruling passion was consuming her. Poor old Griff! he was glad enough to see me, but he is wofully shaky, and nearly came to tears when he asked after Ted and all at home. They had an upset of their carriage in Vienna last winter, and he got some twist, or other damage, which he thought nothing of, but it has never righted itself; I am sure he is very ill, and ought to be looked after. He has had only foreign doctoring, and you know he never was strong in languages. I heard of the medico here inquiring what precise symptom *der Englander* meant by being "down in zie mout!" Poor Griff is that, whatever else he is, and Selina does not see it, nor anything else but her *rouge et noir* table. I am afraid he plays too, when he is up to it, but he can't stand much of the stuffiness of the place, and he respects my innocence, poor old beggar; so he has kept out of it, since we have been here. He seems glad to have me to look after him, but afraid to let me stay, for fear of my falling a victim to the place. I can't well tell him that there is a perpetual warning to youth in the persons of himself and his Peacock. His mind

might be vastly relieved if I were out of it, but scarcely his body; and I shall not leave him till I hear from home. Thomson says I am right. I should like to bring the poor old man home for advice, especially if my lady could be left behind, and by all appearances she would not object. Could not you come, or mamma? Speak to papa about it. It is all so disgusting that I really could not write to him. It is enough to break one's heart to see Griff when he hears about home, and Edward, and Emily. I told him how famously you were getting on, and he said, "It has been all up, up with him, all down, down with me," and then he wanted me to fix my day for leaving Baden, as if it were a sink of infection. I fancy he thinks me a mere infant still, for he won't heed a word of advice about taking care of himself, and *will* do the most foolish things imaginable for a man in his state, though I can't make out what is the matter with him. I tried both French and Latin with his doctor, equally in vain.'

There was a great consultation over this letter. Our parents would fain have gone at once to Baden, but my father was far from well; in fact, it was the beginning of the break-up of his constitution. He had been ageing ever since his disappointment in Griffith, and though he had so enjoyed his jaunt with my mother that he had seemed revived for

the time, he had been visibly failing ever since the winter, and my mother durst not leave him. Indeed she was only too well aware that her presence was apt to inspire Selina with the spirit of contradiction, and that Clarence would have a better chance alone. He was to go up to London by the mail train, see Mr. Castleford, and cross to Ostend.

A valise from the lumber-room was wanted, and at bedtime he went in quest of it. He came back white and shaken; and I said—

'You have not seen *her?*'

'Yes, I have.'

'It is not her time of year.'

'No; I was not even thinking of her. There was none of the wailing, but when I looked up from my rummaging, there was her face as if in a window or mirror on the wall.'

'Don't dwell on it' was all I could entreat, for the apparition at unusual times had been mentioned as a note of doom, and not only did it weigh on me, but it might send Clarence off in a desponding mood. Tidings were less rapid when telegraphs were not, and railways incomplete. Clarence did not reach Baden till ten days after the despatch of Martyn's letter, and Griffith's condition had in the meantime become much more serious. Low fever had set in, and he was confined to his dreary lodgings, where Martyn was doing his best for him in

an inexperienced, helpless sort of way, while Lady Peacock was at the *salle*, persisting in her belief that the ailment was a temporary matter. Martyn afterwards declared that he had never seen anything more touching than poor Griff's look of intense rest and relief at Clarence's entrance.

On the way through London, by the assistance of Mr. Castleford, Clarence had ascertained how to procure the best medical advice attainable, and he was linguist enough to be an adequate interpreter. Alas! all that was achieved was the discovery that between difficulties of language, Griff's own indifference, and his wife's carelessness, the injury had developed into fatal disease. An operation *might* yet save him, if he could rally enough for it, but the fever was rapidly destroying his remaining strength. Selina ascribed it to excitement at meeting Martyn, and indeed he had been subject to such attacks every autumn. Any way, he had no spirits nor wish for improvement. If his brothers told him he was better, he smiled and said it was like a condemned criminal trying to recover enough for the gallows. His only desire was to be let alone and have Clarence with him. He had ceased to be uneasy as to Martyn's exposure to temptation, but he said he could hardly bear to watch that bright, fresh young manhood, and recollect how few years had passed since he had been such another, nor did

he like to have any nurse save Clarence. His wife at first acquiesced, holding fast to the theory of the periodical autumnal fever, and then that the operation would restore him to health; and as her presence fretted him, and he received her small attentions peevishly, she persisted in her usual habits, and heard with petulance his brothers' assurances of his being in a critical condition, declaring that it was always thus with these fevers—he was always cross and low-spirited, and no one could tell what she had undergone with him.

Then came days of positive pain, and nights of delirious, dreary murmuring about home and all of us, more especially Ellen Fordyce. Clarence had no time for letters, and Martyn's became a call for mamma, with the old childish trust in her healing and comforting powers, declaring that he would meet her at Cologne, and steer her through the difficulties of foreign travel.

Hesitation was over now. My father was most anxious to send her, and she set forth, secure that she could infuse life, energy, and resolution into her son, when those two poor boys had failed.

It was not, however, Martyn who met her, but his friend Thomson, with the tidings that the suffering had become so severe as to prevent Martyn from leaving Baden, not only on his brother's account, but because Lady Peacock had at last taken

alarm, and was so uncontrollable in her distress that he was needed to keep her out of the sickroom, where her presence, poor thing, only did mischief.

She evidently had a certain affection for her husband; and it was the more piteous that in his present state he only regarded her as the tempter who had ruined his life—his false Duessa, who had led him away from Una. On one unhappy evening he had been almost maddened by her insisting on arguing with him; he called her a hag, declared she had been the death of his children, the death of that dear one—could she not let him alone now she had been the death of himself?

When Martyn took her away, she wept bitterly, and told enough to make the misery of their life apparent, when the gaiety was over, and regrets and recriminations set in.

However, there came a calmer interval, when the suffering passed off, but in the manner which made the German doctor intimate that hope was over. Would life last till his mother came?

His brothers had striven from the first to awaken thoughts of higher things, and turn remorse into repentance; but every attempt resulted in strange, sad wanderings about Esau, the birthright, and the blessing. Indeed, these might not have been entirely wanderings, for once he said, 'It is better this way, Bill. You don't know what you wish in try-

ing to bring me round. Don't be hard on me. She drove me to it. It is all right now. The Jews will be disappointed.'

For even at the crisis in London, he had concealed that he had raised money on *post obits*, so that, had he outlived my father, Chantry House would have been lost. Lady Peacock's fortune had been undermined when she married him; extravagance and gambling had made short work of the rest.

Why should I speak of such things here, except to mourn over our much-loved brother, with all his fine qualities and powers wasted and overthrown? He clung to Clarence's affection, and submitted to prayers and psalms, but without response. He showed tender recollection of us all, but scarcely durst think of his father, and hardly appeared to wish to see his mother. Clarence's object soon came to be to obtain forgiveness for the wife, since bitterness against her seemed the great obstacle to seeking pardon, peace, or hope; but each attempt only produced such bitterness against her, and such regrets and mourning for Ellen, as fearfully shook the failing frame, while he moaned forth complaints of the blandishments and raillery with which his temptress had beguiled him. Clarence tried in vain to turn away this idea, but nothing had any effect till he bethought himself of Ellen's message, that she knew

even this fatal act had been prompted by generosity of spirit. There was truth enough in it to touch Griff, but only so far as to cry, 'What might I not have been with her?' Still, there was no real softening till my mother came. He knew her at once, and all the old childish relations were renewed between them. There was little time left now, but he was wholly hers. Even Clarence was almost set aside, save where strength was needed, and the mother seemed to have equal control of spirit and body. It was she, who, scarcely aware of what had gone before, caused him to admit Selina.

'Tell her not to talk,' he said. 'But we have each much to forgive one another.'

She came in, awed and silent, and he let her kiss him, sit near at hand, and wait on my mother, whose coming had, as it were, insensibly taken the bitterness away and made him as a little child in her hands. He could follow prayers in which she led him, as he could not, or did not seem to do, with any one else, for he was never conscious of the presence of the clergyman whom Thomson hunted up and brought, and who prayed aloud with Martyn while the physical agony claimed both my mother and Clarence.

Once Griff looked about him and called out for our father, then recollecting, muttered, 'No—the birthright gone—no blessing.'

It grieved us much, it grieves me now, that this was his last distinct utterance. He *looked* as if the comforting replies and the appeals to the Source of all redemption did awaken a response, but he never spoke articulately again; and only thirty-six hours after my mother's arrival, all was over.

Poor Selina went into passions of hysterics and transports of grief, needing all the firmness of so resolute a woman as my mother to deal with her. She was wild in self-accusation, and became so ill that the care of her was a not unwholesome occupation for my mother, who was one of those with whom sorrow has little immediate outlet, and is therefore the more enduring.

She would not bring our brother's coffin home, thinking the agitation would be hurtful to my father, and anxious to get back to him as soon as possible. So Griff was buried at Baden, and from time to time some of us have visited his grave. Of course she proposed Selina's return to Chantry House with her; but Mr. Clarkson, the brother, had come out to the funeral, and took his sister home with him, certainly much to our relief, though all the sad party at Baden had drawn much nearer together in these latter days.

CHAPTER XVI.

A PURPOSE.

'It then draws near the season
Wherein the spirit held his wont to walk.'

Hamlet.

We had really lost our Griffith long before—our bright, generous, warm-hearted, promising Griff, the brilliance of our home; but his actual death made the first breach in a hitherto unbroken family, and was a new and strange shock. It made my father absolutely an old man; and it also changed Martyn. His first contact with responsibility, suffering, and death had demolished the light-hearted boyishness which had lasted in the youngest of the family through all his high aspirations. Till his return to Oxford, his chief solace was in getting some one of us alone, going through all the scenes at Baden, discussing his new impressions of the trials and perplexities of life, and seeking out passages in the books that were becoming our oracles. What he had admired externally before, he was grasping from within; nor can I describe what the *Lyra Apostolica*,

and the two first volumes of *Parochial Sermons preached at Littlemore*, became to us.

Mr. Clarkson had been rather dry with my brothers at Baden, evidently considering that poor Griffith had been as fatal to his sister as we thought Selina had been to our brother. It was hardly just, for there had been much more to spoil in him than in her; and though she would hardly have trod a much higher path, there is no saying what he might have been but for her.

Griffith had said nothing about providing for her, not having forgiven her till he was past recollecting the need, but her brother had intimated that something was due from the family, and Clarence had assented—not, indeed, as to her deserts, poor woman, but her claims and her needs—well knowing that my father would never suffer Griff's widow to be in want.

He judged rightly. My father was nervously anxious to arrange for giving her £500 a year, in the manner most likely to prevent her from making away with it, and leaving herself destitute. But there had already been heavy pulls on his funded property, and ways and means had to be considered, making Clarence realise that he had become the heir. Somehow, there still remained, especially with my mother and himself, a sense of his being a failure, and an inferior substitute, although my father had

long come to lean upon him, as never had been the case with our poor Griff.

The first idea of raising the amount required was by selling an outlying bit of the estate near the Wattlesea Station, for which an enterprising builder was making offers, either to purchase or take on a building lease. My father had received several letters on the subject, and only hesitated from a feeling against breaking up the estate, especially if this were part of the original Chantry House property, and not a more recent acquisition of the Winslows. Moreover, he would do nothing without Clarence's participation.

The title-deeds were not in the house, for my father had had too much of the law to meddle more than he could help with his own affairs, and had left them in the hands of the family solicitor at Bristol, where Clarence was to go and look over them. He rejoiced in the opportunity of being able to see whether anything would throw light on the story of the mullion chamber; and the certainty that the Wattlesea property had never been part of the old endowment of the Chantry did not seem nearly so interesting as a packet of yellow letters tied with faded red tape. Mr. Ryder made no difficulty in entrusting these to him, and we read them by our midnight lamp.

Clarence had seen poor Margaret's will, bequeath-

ing her entire property to her husband's son, Philip Winslow, and had noted the date, 1705; also the copy of the decision in the Court of Probate that there was no sufficient evidence of entail on the Fordyce family to bar her power of disposing of it. We eagerly opened the letters, but found them disappointing, as they were mostly offerings of 'Felicitations' to Philip Winslow on having established his 'Just Claim,' and 'refuted the malicious Accusations of Calumny.' They only served to prove the fact that he had been accused of something, and likewise that he had powerful friends, and was thought worth being treated with adulation, according to the fashion of his day. Perhaps it was hardly to be expected that he should have preserved evidence against himself, but it was baffling to sift so little out of such a mass of correspondence. If we could have had access to the Fordyce papers, no doubt they would have given the other phase of the transaction, but they were unattainable. The only public record that Clarence could discover was much abbreviated, and though there was some allusion to intimidation, the decision seemed to have been fixed by the non-existence of any entail.

Christmas was drawing on, and gathering together what was left of us. Though Griffith had spent only one Christmas at home in nine years, it was wonderful how few we seemed, even when

Martyn returned. My father liked to have us about him, and even spoke of Clarence's giving up his post as manager at Bristol, and living entirely at home to attend to the estate; but my mother did not encourage the idea. She could not quite bear to accept any one in Griff's place, and rightly thought there was not occupation enough to justify bringing Clarence home. I was competent to assist my father through all the landlord's business that came to him within doors, and Emily had ridden and walked about enough with him to be an efficient inspector of crops and repairs, besides that Clarence himself was within reach.

'Indeed,' he said to me, 'I cannot loose my hold on Frith and Castleford till I see my way into the future.'

I did not know what he intended either then or when he gave his voice against dismembering the property by selling the Wattlesea estate, but arranged for raising Selina's income otherwise, persuading my father to let him undertake the building of the required cottages out of his own resources, on principles much more wholesome than were likely to be employed by the speculator. Nor did I grasp what was in his mind when he made me look out my 'ghost journal,' as we called my record of each apparition reported in the mullion chamber or the lawn, with marks to those about which we

had no reasonable doubt. Separately there might be explanation, but conjointly and in connection with the date they had a remarkable force.

'I am resolved,' said Clarence, 'to see whether that figure can have a purpose. I have thought of it all those years. It has hitherto had no fair play. I was too much upset by the sight, and beaten by the utter incredulity of everybody else; but now I am determined to look into it.'

There was both awe and resolution in his countenance, and I only stipulated that he should not be alone, or with no more locomotive companion than myself. Martyn was as old as I had been at our former vigil, and a person to be relied on.

A few months ago he would have treated the matter as a curious adventurous enterprise—a concession to superstition or imagination; but now he took it up with much grave earnestness. He had been discussing the evidence for such phenomena with friends at Oxford, and the conclusion had been that they were at times permitted, sometimes as warnings, sometimes to accomplish the redress of a wrong, sometimes to teach us the reality of the spiritual world about us; and, likewise, that some constitutions were more susceptible than others to these influences. Of course he had adduced all that he knew of his domestic haunted chamber,

but had found himself uncertain as to the amount of direct or trustworthy evidence. So he eagerly read our jottings, and was very anxious to keep watch with Clarence, though there were greater difficulties in the way than when the outer chamber was Griffith's sitting-room, and always had a fire lighted.

To our disappointment, likewise, there came an invitation from the Eastwoods for the evening of the 27th of December, the second of the recurring days of the phantom's appearance. My father could not, and my mother would not go, but they so much wanted my brothers and sister to accept it that it could not well be declined. It was partly a political affair, and my father was anxious to put Clarence forward, and make him take his place as the future squire; and my mother thought depression had lasted long enough with her children, and did not like to see Martyn so grave and preoccupied. 'It was quite right and very nice in him, dear boy, but it was not natural at his age, though he was to be a clergyman.'

As to Emily, her gentle cheerfulness had helped us all through our time of sorrow, and just now we had been gratified by the tidings of young Lawrence Frith. That youth was doing extremely well. There had been golden reports from manager and chaplain, addressed to Mr. Castleford, the latter adding that the young man evidently owed much

to Mr. Winslow's influence. Moreover, Lawrence had turned out an excellent correspondent. Long letters, worthy of forming a book of travels, came regularly to Clarence and me, indeed they were thought worth being copied into that fat clasped MS. book in the study. Writing them must have been a real solace to the exile, in his island outside the town, whither all the outer barbarians were relegated. So, no doubt, was the packing of the gifts that were gradually making Prospect Cottage into a Chinese exhibition of nodding mandarins, ivory balls, exquisite little cups, and faggots of tea. Also, a Chinese walking doll was sent humbly as an offering for the amusement of Miss Winslow's school children, whom indeed she astonished beyond measure; and though her wheels are out of order, and her movements uncertain, she is still a stereotyped incident in the Christmas entertainments.

There was no question but that these letters and remembrances gave great pleasure to Emily; but I believe she was not in the least conscious that though greater in degree, it was not of the same quality as that she felt when a runaway scholar who had gone to sea presented her in token of gratitude with a couple of dried sea-horses.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MIDNIGHT CHASE.

' What human creature in the dead of night
Had coursed, like hunted hare, that cruel distance,
Had sought the door, the window in her flight
Striving for dear existence ?'

HOOD.

ON the night of the 26th of December, Clarence and Martyn, well wrapped in greatcoats, stole into the outer mullion room; but though the usual sounds were heard, and the mysterious light again appeared, Martyn perceived nothing else, and even Clarence declared that if there were anything besides, it was far less distinct to him than it had been previously. Could it be that his spiritual perceptions were growing dimmer as he became older, and outgrew the sensitiveness of nerves and imagination ?

We came to the conclusion that it would be best to watch the outside of the house, rather than within the chamber; and the dinner-party facilitated this, since it accounted for being up and about nearer to the hour when the ghost might be expected.

Egress could be had through the little garden door, and I undertook to sit up and keep up the fire.

All three came to my room on their return home, for Emily had become aware of our scheme, and entreated to be allowed to watch with us. Clarence had unfastened the alarum bell from my shutters, and taken down the bar after the curtains had been drawn by the housemaid, and he now opened them. It was a frosty moonlight night, and the lawn lay white and crisp, marked with fantastic shadows. The others looked grave and pale, Emily was in a thick white shawl and hood, with a swan's down boa over her black dress, a somewhat ghostly figure herself, but we were in far too serious a mood for light observations.

There was something of a shudder about Clarence as he went to unbolt the back door; Martyn kept close to him. We saw them outside, and then Emily flew after them. From my window I could watch them advancing on the central gravel walk, Emily standing still between her brothers, clasping an arm of each. I saw the light near the ruin, and caught some sounds as of shrieks and of threatening voices, the light flitted towards the gable of the mullion rooms, and then was the concluding scream. All was over, and the three came back much agitated, Emily sinking into an armchair, panting, her hands over her face, and a nervous trembling through her

whole frame, Martyn's eyes looking wide and scared, Clarence with the well-known look of terror on his face. He hurried to fetch the tray of wine and water that was always left on the table when any one went to a party at night, but he shivered too much to prevent the glasses from jingling, and I had to pour out the sherry and administer it to Emily. 'Oh! poor, poor thing,' she gasped out.

'You saw?' I exclaimed.

'They did,' said Martyn; 'I only saw the light, and heard! That was enough!' and he shuddered again.

'Then Emily did,' I began, but Clarence cut me short. 'Don't ask her to-night.'

'Oh! let me tell,' cried Emily; 'I can't go away to bed till I have had it out.'

Then she gave the details, which were the more notable because she had not, like Martyn, been studying our jottings, and had heard comparatively little of the apparition.

'When I joined the boys,' she said, 'I looked toward the mullion rooms; I saw the windows lighted up, and heard a sobbing and crying inside.'

'So did I,' put in Martyn, and Clarence bent his head.

'Then,' added Emily, 'by the moonlight I saw the gable end, not blank, and covered by the magnolia as it is now, but with stone steps up to the

bricked-up doorway. The door opened, the light spread, and there came out a lady in black, with a lamp in one hand, and a kind of parcel in the other, and oh, when she turned her face this way, it was Ellen's !'

'So you called out,' whispered Martyn.

'Dear Ellen, not as she used to be,' added Emily, 'but like what she was when last I saw her; no, hardly that either, for this was sad, sad, scared, terrified, with eyes all tears, as Ellen never, never was.'

'I saw,' added Clarence, 'I saw the shape, but not the countenance and expression as I used to do.'

'She came down the steps,' continued Emily, 'looking about her as if making her escape, but, just as she came opposite to us, there was a sound of tipsy laughing and singing from the gate up by the wood.'

'I thought it real,' said Martyn.

'Then,' continued Emily, 'she wavered, then turned and went under an arch in the ruin—I fancied she was hiding something—then came out and fled across to the steps; but there were two dark men rushing after her, and at the stone steps there was a frightful shriek, and then it was all over, the steps gone, all quiet, and the magnolia leaves glistening in the moonshine. Oh ! what can it all mean ?'

'Went under the arch,' repeated Clarence. 'Is it what she hid there that keeps her from resting ?'

'Then you believe it really happened?' said Emily, 'that some terrible scene is being acted over again. Oh! but can it be the real spirits!'

'That is one of the great mysteries,' answered Martyn; 'but I could tell you of other instances.'

'Don't now,' I interposed; 'Emily has had quite enough.'

We reminded her that the ghastly tragedy was over and would not recur again for another year; but she was greatly shaken, and we were very sorry for her, when the clock warned her to go to her own room, whither Martyn escorted her. He lighted every candle he could find, and revived the fire; but she was sadly overcome by what she had witnessed, she lay awake all the rest of the night, and in the morning, looked so unwell, and had so little to tell about the party that my mother thought her spirits had been too much broken for gaieties.

The real cause could not be confessed, for it would have been ascribed to some kind of delirium, and have made a commotion for which my father was unfit. Besides, we had reached an age when, though we would not have disobeyed, liberty of thought and action had become needful. All our private confabulations were on this extraordinary scene. We looked for the arch in the ruin, but there was, as our morning senses told us, nothing of the kind. She tried to sketch her remembrance of

both that and the gable of the mullion chamber, and Martyn prowled about in search of some hiding-place. Our antiquarian friend, Mr. Stafford, had made a conjectural drawing of the Chapel restored, and all the portfolios about the house were searched for it, disquieting mamma, who suspected Martyn's Oxford notions of intending to rebuild it, nor would he say that it ought not to be done. However, he with his more advanced ecclesiology, pronounced Mr. Stafford's reconstruction to be absolutely mistaken and impossible, and set to work on a fresh plan, which, by the bye, he derides at present. It afforded, however, an excuse for routing under the ivy and among the stones, but without much profit. From the mouldings on the materials and in the stables and the front porch, it was evident that the chapel had been used as a quarry, and Emily's arch was very probably that of the entrance door. In a dry summer, the foundations of the walls and piers could be traced on the turf, and the stumps of one or two columns remained, but the rest was only a confused heap of fragments within which no one could have entered as in that strange vision.

Another thing became clear. There had once been a wall between the beech wood and the lawn, with a gate or door in it; Chapman could just remember its being taken down, in James Winslow's early married life, when landscape gardening was

the fashion. It must have been through this that the Winslow brothers were returning, when poor Margaret perhaps expected them to enter by the front.

We wished we could have consulted Dame Dearlove, but she had died a few years before, and her school was extinct.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WILLS OLD AND NEW.

> 'And that to-night thou must watch with me
> To win the treasure of the tomb.'
>
> SCOTT.

SOME seasons seem to be peculiarly marked, as if Death did indeed walk forth in them.

Old Mr. Frith died in the spring of 1841, and it proved that he had shown his gratitude to Clarence by a legacy of shares in the firm amounting to about £2000. The rest of his interest therein went to Lawrence Frith, and his funded property to his sister, Mrs. Stevens, a very fair and upright disposition of his wealth.

Only six weeks later, my father had a sudden seizure, and there was only time to summon Clarence from London and Martyn from Oxford, before a second attack closed his righteous and godly career upon earth.

My mother was very still and calm, hardly shedding a tear, but her whole demeanour was as if life were over for her, and she had nothing to do save

to wait. She seemed to care very little for tendernesses or attentions on our part. No doubt she would have been more desolate without them, but we always had a baffled feeling, as though our affection were contrasted with her perfect union with her husband. Yet they had been a singularly undemonstrative couple; I never saw a kiss pass between them, except as greeting or farewell before or after a journey; and if my mother could not use the terms papa or your father, she always said, 'Mr. Winslow.' There was a large gathering at the funeral, including Mr. Fordyce, but he slept at Hillside, and we scarcely saw him—only for a few kind words and squeezes of the hand. Holy Week was begun, and he had to hurry back to Beachharbour that very night.

The will had been made on my father's coming into the inheritance. It provided a jointure of £800 per annum for my mother, and gave each of the younger children £3000. A codicil had been added shortly after Griffith's death, written in my father's hand, and witnessed by Mr. Henderson and Amos Bell. This put Clarence in the position of heir; secured £500 a year to Griffith's widow, charged on the estate, and likewise an additional £200 a year to Emily and to me, hers till marriage, mine for life, £300 a year to Martyn, until Earlscombe Rectory should be voided, when it was to be offered to him. The executors had originally been Mr. Castleford

and my mother, but by this codicil, Clarence was substituted for the former.

The legacies did not come out of the Chantry House property, for my father had, of course, means of his own besides, and bequests had accrued to both him and my mother; but Clarence was inheriting the estate much more burthened than it had been in 1829, having £2000 a year to raise out of its proceeds.

My mother was quite equal to business, with a sort of outside sense, which she applied to it when needful. Clarence made it at once evident to her that she was still mistress of Chantry House, and that it was still to be our home; and she immediately calculated what each ought to contribute to the housekeeping. She looked rather blank when she found that Clarence did not mean to give up business, nor even to become a sleeping partner; but when she examined into ways and means, she allowed that he was prudent, and that perhaps it was due to Mr. Castleford not to deprive him of an efficient helper under present circumstances. Meantime she was content to do her best for Earlscombe 'for the present,' by which she meant till her son brought home a wife; but we knew that to him the words bore a different meaning, though he was still in doubt and uncertainty how to act, and what might be the wrong to be undone.

He was anxious to persuade her to go from home for a short time, and prevailed on her at last to take Emily and me to Dawlish, while the repairs went on which had been deferred during my father's feebleness; at least that was the excuse. We two, going with great regret, knew that his real reason was to have an opportunity for a search among the ruins.

It was in June, just as Martyn came back from Oxford, eager to share in the quest. Those two brothers would trust no one to help them, but one by one, in the long summer evenings, they moved each of those stones; I believe the servants thought they were crazed, but they could explain with some truth that they wanted to clear up the disputed points as to the architecture, as indeed they succeeded in doing.

They had, however, nearly given up, having reached the original pavement and disinterred the piscina of the side altar, also a beautiful coffin lid with a floriated cross; when, in a kind of hollow, Martyn lit upon the rotten remains of something silken, knotted together. It seemed to have enclosed a bundle. There were some rags that might have been a change of clothing, also a Prayer-book, decayed completely except the leathern covering, inside which was the startling inscription, 'Margaret Winslow, her booke; Lord, have mercy on a miserable widow

woman.' There was also a thick leathern roll, containing needles, pins, and scissors, entirely corroded, and within these a paper, carefully folded, but almost destroyed by the action of damp and the rust of the steel, so that only thus much was visible. 'I, Margaret Winslow, being of sound mind, do hereby give and bequeath——'

Then came stains that defaced every line, till the extreme end, where a seal remained; the date 1707 was legible, and there were some scrawls, probably the poor lady's signature, and perhaps that of witnesses. Clarence and Martyn said very little to one another, but they set out for Dawlish the next day.

'Found' was indicated to us, but no more, for they arrived late, and had to sleep at the hotel, after an evening when we were delighted to hear my mother ask so many questions about household and parish affairs. In the morning she was pleased to send all 'the children' out on the beach, then free from the railway. It was a beautiful day, with the intensely blue South Devon sea dancing in golden ripples, and breaking on the shore with the sound Clarence loved so well, as, in the shade of the dark crimson cliffs, Emily sat at my feet and my brothers unfolded their strange discoveries into her lap. There was a kind of solemnity in the thing; we scarcely spoke, except that Emily said, 'Oh, will she come again,' and, as the tears gathered at sight

of the pathetic petition in the old book, 'Was that granted?'

We reconstructed our theory. The poor lady must have repented of the unjust will forced from her by her stepsons, and contrived to make another; but she must have been kept a captive until, during their absence at some Christmas convivialities, she tried to escape; but hearing sounds betokening their return, she had only time to hide the bundle in the ruin before she was detected, and in the scuffle received a fatal blow.

'But why,' I objected, 'did she not remain hidden till her enemies were safe in the house?'

'Terrified beyond the use of her senses,' said Clarence.

'By all accounts,' said Martyn, 'the poor creature must have been rather a silly woman.'

'For shame, Martyn,' cried Emily, 'how can you tell? They might have seen her go in, or she might have feared being missed.'

'Or if you watch next Christmas you may see it all explained.'

To which Emily replied with a shiver that nothing would induce her to go through it again, and indeed she hoped the spirit would rest since the discovery had been made.

'And then?'—one of us said, and there was a silence, and another futile attempt to read the will.

'I shall take it to London and see what an expert can do with it,' said Clarence. 'I have heard of wonderful decipherings in the Record Office; but you will remember that even if it can be made out, it will hardly invalidate our possession after a hundred and thirty years.'

'Clarence!' cried Emily in a horrified voice; and I asked if the date were not later than that by which we inherited.

'Three years,' Clarence said, 'yes; but as things stand, it is absolutely impossible for me to make restitution at present.'

'On account of the burthens on the estate?' I said.

'Oh, but we could give up,' said Emily.

'I dare say!' said Clarence, smiling; 'but to say nothing of poor Selina, my mother would hardly see it in the same light, nor should I deal rightly, even if I could make any alterations, I doubt whether my father would have held himself bound—certainly not while no one can read this document.'

'It would simply outrage his legal mind,' said Martyn.

'Then what is to be done? Is the injustice to be perpetual?' asked Emily.

'This is what I have thought of,' said Clarence. 'We must leave matters as they are till I can realise enough either to pay off all these bequests, or to offer Mr. Fordyce the value of the estate.'

'It is not the whole,' I said.

'Not the Wattlesea part. This means Chantry House and the three farms in the village. £10,000 would cover it.'

'Is it possible?' asked Emily.

'Yes,' returned Clarence, 'God helping me. You know our concern is bringing in good returns, and Mr. Castleford will put me in the way of doing more with my available capital.'

'We will save so as to help you!' added Emily. At which he smiled.

CHAPTER XIX.

ON A SPREE.

' Her eyes as stars of twilight fair,
Like twilight too, her dusky hair,
But all things else about her drawn
From May-time and the cheerful dawn,
A dancing shape, an image gay,
To haunt, to startle, and waylay.'

WORDSWORTH.

CLARENCE went to London according to his determination, and as he had for some time been urgent that I should try some newly-invented mechanical appliances, he took me with him, this being the last expedition of the ancient yellow chariot. One of his objects was that I should see St. Paul's, Knightsbridge, which was then the most distinguished church of our school of thought, and where there was to be some special preaching. The Castlefords had a seat there, and I was settled there in good time, looking at the few bits of stained glass then in the east window, when, as the clergy came in from the vestry, I beheld a familiar face, and recognised the fine countenance and bearing of our dear old friend Frank Fordyce.

Then, looking at the row of ladies in front of me, I beheld for a moment an outline of a profile recalling many things. No doubt, Anne Fordyce was there, though instead of barely emulating my stunted stature, she towered above her companions, looking to my mind most fresh and graceful in her pretty summer dress; and I knew that Clarence saw her too.

I had never heard Mr. Fordyce preach before, as in his flying visits his ministrations were due at Hillside; and I certainly should have been struck with the force and beauty of his sermon if I had never known him before. It was curious that it was on the 49th Psalm, meant perhaps for the fashionable congregation, but remarkably chiming in with the feelings of us, who were conscious of an inheritance of evil from one who had 'done well unto himself;' though, no doubt, that was the last thing honest Parson Frank was thinking of.

When the service was over, and Anne turned, she became aware of us, and her face beamed all over. It was a charming face, with a general likeness to dear Ellen's, but without the fragile ethereal look, and all health, bloom, and enjoyment recalling her father's. She was only moving to let her pew-fellows pass out, and was waiting for him to come for her, as he did in a few moments, and he too was all

pleasure and cordiality. He told us when we were outside that he had come up to preach, and 'had brought Miss Anne up for a spree.' They were at a hotel, Mrs. Fordyce was at home, and the Lesters were not in town this season—a matter of rejoicing to us. Could we not come home and dine with them at once? We were too much afraid of disappointing Gooch to do so, but they made an appointment to meet us at the Royal Academy as soon as it was open the next morning.

There was a fortnight of enjoyment. Parson Frank was like a boy out for a holiday. He had not spent more than a day or two in town for many years; Anne had not been there since early childhood, and they adopted Clarence as their lioniser, going through such a country-cousin course of delights as in that memorable time with Ellen. They even went down to Eton and Windsor, Frank Fordyce being an old Etonian. I doubt whether Clarence ever had a more thoroughly happy time, not even in the north of Devon, for there was no horse on his mind, and he was not suppressed as in those days. Indeed, I believe, it is the experience of others besides ourselves that there is often more unmixed pleasure on casual holidays like this than in those of early youth; for even if spirits are less high (which is not always the case), anticipations are less eager, there is more readiness to

accept whatever comes, more matured appreciation, and less fret and friction at *contretemps*.

I was not much of a drag, for when I could not be with the others, I had old friends, and the museum was as dear to me as ever, in those recesses that had been the paradise of my youth; but there was a good deal in which we could all share, and as usual they were all kind consideration.

Anne overflowed with minute remembrances of her old home, and Clarence so basked in her sunshine that it began to strike me that here might be the solution of all the perplexities especially after the first evening, when he had shown his strange discovery to Mr. Fordyce, who simply laughed and said we need not trouble ourselves about it. Illegible was it? He was heartily glad to hear that it was. Even otherwise, forty years' possession was quite enough, and then he pointed to the grate, and said that was the best place for such things. There was no fire, but Clarence could hardly rescue the paper from being torn up.

As to the ghost, he knew much less than his daughter Ellen had done. He said his old aunt had some stories about Chantry House being haunted, and had thought it incumbent on her to hate the Winslows, but he had thought it all nonsense, and such stories were much better forgotten. 'Would he not see if there were any letters?'

There might be, perhaps in the solicitor's office at Bath, but if he ever got hold of them, he should certainly burn them. What was the use of being Christians, if such quarrels were to be remembered?

Anne knew nothing. Aunt Peggy had died before she could remember, and even Martyn had been discreet. Clarence said no more after that one conversation, and seemed to me engrossed between his necessary business at the office, and the pleasant expeditions with the Fordyces. Only when they were on the point of returning home, did he tell me that the will had been pronounced utterly past deciphering, and that he thought he saw a way of setting all straight. 'So do I,' was my rejoinder, and there must have been a foolishly sagacious expression about me that made him colour up, and say, 'No such thing, Edward. Don't put that into my head.'

'Isn't it there already?'

'It ought not to be. It would be mere treachery in these sweet, fresh, young, innocent days of hers, knowing too what her mother would think of it and of me. Didn't you observe in old Frank's unguarded way of reading letters aloud, and then trying to suppress bits, that Mrs. Fordyce was not at all happy at our being so much about with them, poor woman. No wonder! the child is too young,' he added, showing how much, after all, he was thinking

of it. It would be taking a base advantage of them *now*.

'But by and by?'

'If she should be still free when the great end is achieved and the evil repaired, then I might dare.'

He broke off with a look of glad hope, and I could see it was forbearance rather than constitutional diffidence that withheld him from awakening the maiden's feelings. He was a very fine looking man, in his prime—tall, strong, and well made, with a singularly grave, thoughtful expression, and a rare but most winning smile; and Anne was overflowing with affectionate gladness at intercourse with one who belonged to the golden age of her childhood. I could scarcely believe but that in the friction of the parting the spark would be elicited, and I should even have liked to kindle it for them myself, being tolerably certain that warm-hearted, unguarded Parson Frank would forget all about his lady and blow it with all his might.

We dined with the Fordyces at their hotel, and sat in the twilight with the windows open, and we made Anne and Clarence sing, as both could do without notes, but he would not undertake to remember anything with an atom of sentiment in it, and when Anne did sing, 'Auld lang syne,' with all her heart, he went and got into a dark corner, and barely said, 'Thank you.'

Not a definite answer could be extracted from him in reply to all the warm invitations to Beach-harbour that were lavished on us by the father, while the daughter expatiated on its charms; the rocks I might sketch, the waves and the delicious boating, and above all the fisher children and the church. Nothing was wanting but to have us all there! Why had we not brought Mrs. Winslow, and Emily, and Martyn, instead of going to Dawlish?

Good creatures, they little knew the chill that had been cast upon Martyn. They even bemoaned the having seen so little of him. And we knew all the time that they were mice at play in the absence of their excellent and cautious cat.

'Now mind you do come!' said Anne, as we were in the act of taking leave. 'It would be as good as Hillside to have you by my Lion rock. He has a nose just like old Chapman's, and you must sketch it before it crumbles off. Yes, and I want to show you all the dear old things you made for my baby-house after the fire, your dear little wardrobe and all.'

She was coming out with us, oblivious that a London hotel was not like her own free sea-side house. Her father was out at the carriage door, prepared to help me in, Clarence halted a moment—

'Please, pray, go back, Anne,' he said, and his voice trembled. 'This is not home, you know.'

She started back, but paused. 'You'll not forget.'

'Oh no; no fear of my forgetting.'

And when seated beside me, he leant back with a sigh.

'How could you help?' I said.

'How? Why the perfect, innocent, childish, unconsciousness of the thing,' he said, and became silent except for one murmur on the way.

'Consequences must be borne——'

CHAPTER XX.

THE PRICE.

'With thee, my bark, I'll swiftly go
Athwart the foaming brine.'

LORD BYRON.

CLARENCE would not tell me his purpose, he said, till he had considered it more fully; nor could we have much conversation on the way home, as my mother had arranged that we should bring an old friend of hers back with us to pay her a visit. So I had to sit inside and make myself agreeable to Mrs. Wrightson, while Clarence had plenty of leisure for meditation outside on the box seat. The good lady said much on the desirableness of marriage for Clarence, and the comfort it would be to my mother to see Emily settled.

We had heard much in town of railway shares; and the fortunes of Hudson, the railway king, were under discussion. I suspected Clarence of cogitating the using his capital in this manner; and hoped that when he saw his way, he might not think it dishonourable to come into further contact with Anne,

and reveal his hopes. He allowed that he was considering of such investments, but would not say any more.

My mother and Emily had, in the meantime, been escorted home by Martyn. The first thing Clarence did was to bespeak Emily's company in a turn in the garden. What passed then I never knew nor guessed for years after. He consulted her whether, in case he were absent from England for five, seven, or ten years, she would be equal to the care of my mother and me. Martyn, when ordained, would have duties elsewhere, and could only be reckoned upon in emergencies. My mother, though vigorous and practical, had shown symptoms of gout, and if she were ill, I could hardly have done much for her; and on the other hand, though my health and powers of moving were at their best, and I was capable of the headwork of the estate, I was scarcely fit to be the representative member of the family. Moreover, these good creatures took into consideration that poor mamma and I would have been rather at a loss as each other's sole companions. I could sort shades for her Berlin work, and even solve problems of intricate knitting, and I could read to her in the evening; but I could not trot after her to her garden, poultry-yard, and cottages; nor could she enter into the pursuits that Emily had shared with me for so many years. Our connecting link, that

dear sister, knew how sorely she would be missed, and she told Clarence that she felt fully competent to undertake, conjointly with us, all that would be incumbent on Chantry House, if he really wanted to be absent. For the rest, Clarence believed my mother would be the happier for being left regent over the estate; and his scheme broke upon me that very forenoon, when my mother and he were settling some executor's business together, and he told her that Mr. Castleford wished him to go out to Hong-Kong, which was then newly ceded to the English, and where the firm wished to establish a house of business.

'You can't think of it,' she exclaimed, and the sound fell like a knell on my ears.

'I think I must,' was his answer. 'We shall be cut out if we do not get a footing there, and there is no one who can quite answer the purpose.'

'Not that young Frith——'

'Ten to one but he is on his way home. Besides, if not, he has his own work at Canton. We see our way to very considerable advantages, if——'

'Advantages!' she interrupted. 'I hate speculation. I should have thought you might be contented with your station; but that is the worst of merchants,—they never know when to stop. I suppose your ambition is to make this a great

overgrown mansion, so that your father would not know it again.'

'Certainly not that, mamma,' said Clarence, smiling; 'it is the last thing I should think of; but stopping would in this case mean going backward.'

'Why can't Mr. Castleford send one of his own sons?'

'Probably Walter may come out by and by, but he has not experience enough for this.'

Clarence had not in the least anticipated my mother's opposition, for he had come to underestimate her affection for and reliance on him. He had us all against him, for not only could we not bear to part with him, but the climate of Hong-Kong was in evil repute, and I had become persuaded that, with his knowledge of business, railway shares and scrip might be made to realise the amount needed, but he said, 'That is what *I* call speculation. The other matter is trade in which, with Heaven's blessing, I can hope to prosper.'

He explained that Mr. Castleford had received him on his coming to London with almost a request that he would undertake this expedition; but with fears whether, in his new position, he could or would do so, although his presence in China would be very important to the firm at this juncture; and there would be opportunities which would probably

result in very considerable profits after a few years. If Clarence had been, as before, a mere younger brother, it would have been thought an excellent chance; and he would almost have felt bound by his obligations to Mr. Castleford to undertake the first starting of the enterprise, if it had not been for our recent loss, and the doubt whether he could be spared from home.

He made light of the dangers of climate. He had never suffered in that way in his naval days, and scarcely knew what serious illness meant. Indeed, he had outgrown much of that sensibility of nerve which had made him so curiously open to spiritual or semi-spiritual impressions.

'Any way,' he said, 'the thing is right to be done, provided my mother does not make an absolute point of my giving it up; and whether she does or not depends a good deal on how you others put it to her.'

'Right on Mr. Castleford's account?' I asked.

'That is one side of it. To refuse would put him in a serious difficulty; but I could perhaps come home sooner if it were not for this other matter. I told him so far as that it was an object with me to raise this sum in a few years, and he showed me how there is every likelihood of my being able to do so out there. So now I feel in your hands. If you all, and Edward chiefly, set

to and persuade my mother that this undertaking is a dangerous business, and that I can only be led to it by inordinate love of riches——'

'No, no——'

'That's what she thinks,' pursued Clarence, 'and that I want to be a grander man than my father. That's at the bottom of her mind, I see. Well, if you deplore this, and let her think the place can't do without me, she will come out in her strength and make it my duty to stay at home.'

'It is very tempting,' said Emily.

'We all undertook to give up something.'

'We never thought it would come in this way!'

'We never do,' said Clarence.

'Tell me,' said Martyn, 'is this to content that ghost, poor thing? For it is very hard to believe in her, except in the mullion room in December.'

'Exactly so, Martyn,' he answered. 'Impressions fade, and the intellect fails to accept them. But I do not think that is my motive. We know that a wicked deed was done by our ancestor, and we hardly have the right to pray, "Remember not the sins of our forefathers," unless, now that we know the crime, we attempt what restitution in us lies.'

There was no resisting after this appeal, and after the first shock, my mother was ready to admit that as Clarence owed everything to Mr. Castleford, he could not well desert the firm, if it were really

needful for its welfare that he should go out. We got her to look on Mr. Castleford as captain of the ship, and Clarence as first lieutenant; and when she was once convinced that he did not want to aggrandise the family, but to do his duty, she dropped her objections; and we soon saw that the occupations that his absence would impose on her would be a fresh interest in life.

Just as the decision was thus ratified, a packet from Canton arrived for Clarence from Bristol. It was the first reply of young Frith to the tidings of the bequest which had changed the poor clerk to a wealthy man, owning a large proportion of the shares of the prosperous house.

I asked if he were coming home, and Clarence briefly replied that he did not know,—'it depended——'

'Is he going to wed a fair Chinese with lily feet?' asked Martyn, to which the reply was an unusually discourteous 'Bosh,' as Clarence escaped with his letter. He was so reticent about it that I required a solemn assurance that poor Lawrence's head had not been turned by his fortune, and that there was nothing wrong with him. Indeed, there was great stupidity in never guessing the purport of that thick letter, nor that it contained one for Emily, where Lawrence Frith laid himself, and all that he had, at her feet, ascribing to her all the

resolution with which he had kept from evil, and entreating permission to come home and endeavour to win her heart. We lived so constantly together that it is surprising that Clarence contrived to give the letter to Emily in private. She implored him to say nothing to us, and brought him the next day her letter of uncompromising refusal.

He asked whether it would have been the same if he had intended to remain at home.

'As if you were a woman, you conceited fellow,' was all the answer she vouchsafed him.

Nor could he ascertain, nor perhaps would she herself examine, on which side lay her heart of hearts. The proof had come whether she would abide by her pledge to him to accept the care of us in his absence. When he asked it, it had not occurred to him that it might be a renunciation of marriage. Now he perceived that so it had been, but she kept her counsel and so did he. We others never guessed at what was going on between those two.

CHAPTER XXI.

PAYING THE COST.

'But oh! the difference to me.'

WORDSWORTH.

So Clarence was gone, and our new life begun in its changed aspect. Emily showed an almost feverish eagerness to make it busy and cheerful, getting up a sewing class in the village, resuming the study of Greek, grappling with the natural system in botany, all of which had been fitfully proposed but hindered by interruptions and my father's feebleness.

On a suggestion of Mr. Stafford's, we set to work on that *History of Letter Writing* which, what with collecting materials, and making translations, lasted us three years altogether, and was a great resource and pleasure, besides ultimately bringing in a fraction towards the great purpose. Emily has confessed that she worked away a good deal of vague, weary depression, and sense of monotony into those Greek choruses: but to us she was always a sunbeam, with her ever ready attention, and the playfulness which

resumed more of genuine mirth after the first effort and strain of spirits were over.

Then journal-letters on either side began to bridge the gulf of separation,—those which, minus all the specially interesting portions, are to be seen in the volume we culled from them, and which had considerable success in its day.

Martyn worked in the parish and read with Mr. Henderson till he was old enough for Ordination, and then took the curacy of St. Wulstan's, under a hardworking London vicar, and thenceforth his holidays were our festivals. Our old London friends pitied us for what they viewed as a fearfully dull life, and in the visits they occasionally paid us thought they were doing us a great favour by bringing us new ideas and shooting our partridges.

We hardly deserved their compassion: our lives were full of interest to ourselves—that interest which comes of doing ever so feeble a stroke of work in one great cause; and there was much keen participation in the general life of the Church in the crisis through which she was passing. We found that, what with drawing pictures, writing little books, preparing lessons for teachers, and much besides which is now ready done by the National Society and Sunday School Institute, we could do a good deal to assist Martyn in his London work, and our own grew upon us.

For the first year of her widowhood, my mother shrank from society, and afterwards had only spasmodic fits of doubt whether it were not her duty to make my sister go out more. So that now and then Emily did go to a party, or to make a visit of some days or weeks from home, and then we knew how valuable she was. It would be hard to say whether my mother were relieved or disappointed when Emily refused James Eastwood, in spite of many persuasions, not only from himself, but his family. I believe mamma thought it selfish to be glad, and that it was a failure in duty not to have performed that weighty matter of marrying her daughter; feeling in some way inferior to ladies who had disposed of a whole flock under five-and-twenty, whereas she had not been able to get rid of a single one!

Of Clarence's doings in China I need not speak; you have read of them in the book for yourselves, and you know how his work prospered, so that the results more than fulfilled his expectations, and raised the firm to the pitch of greatness and reputation which it has ever since preserved, and this without soiling his hands with the miserable opium traffic. Some of the subordinates were so set on the gains to be thus obtained, that he and Lawrence Frith had a severe struggle with them to prevent it, and were forced conjointly to use all their authority as principals to make it impossible. Those two

were the greatest of friends. Their chief relaxation was one another's company, and their earnest aim was to support the Christian mission, and to keep up the tone of their English dependants, a terribly difficult matter, and one that made the time of their return somewhat doubtful, even when Walter Castleford was gone out to relieve them. Their health had kept up so well that we had ceased to be anxious on that point, and it was through the Castlefords that we received the first hint that Clarence might not be as well as his absence of complaint had led us to believe.

In fact he had never been well since a terrible tempest, when he had worked hard and exposed himself to save life. I never could hear the particulars, for Lawrence was away, and Clarence could not write about it himself, having been prostrated by one of those chills so perilous in hot countries; but from all I have heard, no resident in Hong-Kong would have believed that Mr. Winslow's courage could ever have been called in question. He ought to have come home immediately after that attack of fever; for the five years were over, and his work nearly done; but there was need to consolidate his achievements, and a strong man is only too apt to trifle with his health. We might have guessed something by the languor and brevity of his letters, but we thought the absence of detail owing to his

expectation of soon seeing us ; and had gone on for months expecting the announcement of a speedy return, when an unexpected shock fell on us. Our dear mother was still an active woman, with few signs of age about her, when, in her sixty-seventh year, she was almost suddenly taken from us by an attack of gout in the stomach.

I feel as if I had not done her justice, and as if she might seem stern, unsympathising, and lacking in tenderness. Yet nothing could be further from the truth. She was an old-fashioned mother, who held it her duty to keep up her authority, and counted over-familiarity and indulgence as sins. To her 'the holy spirit of discipline was the beginning of wisdom,' and to make her children godly, truthful, and honourable was a much greater object than to win their love. And their love she had, and kept to a far higher degree than seems to be the case with those who court affection by caresses and indulgence. We knew that her approval was of a generous kind, we prized enthusiastically her rare betrayals of her motherly tenderness, and we depended on her in a manner we only realised in the desolation, dreariness, and helplessness that fell upon us, when we knew that she was gone. She had not, nor had any of us, understood that she was dying, and she had uttered only a few words that could imply any such thought. On hearing that

there was a letter from Clarence, she said, 'Poor Clarence! I should like to have seen him. He is a good boy after all. I've been hard on him, but it will all be right now. God Almighty bless him!'

That was the only formal blessing she left among us. Indeed, the last time I saw her was with an ordinary good-night at the foot of the stairs. Emily said she was glad that I had not to carry with me the remembrance of those paroxysms of suffering. My dear Emily had alone the whole force of that trial—or shall I call it privilege? Martyn did not reach home till some hours after all was over, poor boy.

And in the midst of our desolateness, just as we had let the daylight in again upon our diminished numbers round the table, came a letter from Hong-Kong, addressed to me in Lawrence Frith's writing, and the first thing I saw was a scrawl, as follows:—

'DEAREST TED—All is in your hands. You can do *it*. God bless you all. W. C. W.'

When I came to myself, and could see and hear, Martyn was impressing on me that where there is life there is hope, though indeed, according to poor Lawrence's letter, there was little of either. He feared our hearing indirectly, and therefore wrote to prepare us.

He had been summoned to Hong-Kong to find Clarence lying desperately ill, for the most part semi-delirious, holding converse with invisible forms, or entreating some one to let him alone—he had done his best. In one of his more lucid intervals he had made Lawrence find that note in a case that lay near him, and promise to send it; and he had tried to send some messages, but they had become confused, and he was too weak to speak further.

The next mail was sure to bring the last tidings of one who had given his life for right and justice. It was only a reprieve that what it actually brought was the intelligence that he was still alive, and more sensible, and had been able to take much pleasure in seeing the friend of his youth, Captain Coles, who was there with his ship, the *Douro*. Then there had been a relapse. Captain Coles had brought his doctor to see him, and it had been pronounced that the best chance of saving him was a sea-voyage. The *Douro* had just received orders to return to England, and Coles had offered to take home both the friends as guests, though there was evidently little hope that our brother would reach any earthly home. As we knew afterwards, he had smiled and said it was like rehabilitation to have the chance of dying on board one of H.M. ships. And he was held in such respect, and was so entirely one of the leading men of the little

growing colony, and had been known as such a friend to the naval men, and had so gallantly aided a Queen's ship in that hurricane, that his passage home in this manner only seemed a natural tribute of respect. A few last words from Lawrence told us that he was safely on board, all unconscious of the silent, almost weeping, procession that had escorted his litter to the *Douro's* boat, only too much as if it were his bier. In fact, Captain Coles actually promised him that if he died at sea he should be buried with the old flag.

We could not hope to hear more for at least six weeks, since our letter had come by overland mail, and the *Douro* would take her time. It was a comfort in this waiting time that Martyn could be with us. His rector had been promoted; there was a general change of curates; and as Martyn had been working up to the utmost limits of his strength, we had no scruple in inducing him to remain with us, and undertake nothing fresh till this crisis was past. Though as to rest, not one Sunday passed without requests for his assistance from one or more of the neighbouring clergy.

CHAPTER XXII.

ACHIEVED.

'And hopes and fears that kindle hope,
An undistinguishable throng,
And gentle wishes long subdued—
Subdued and cherished long.'

S. T. Coleridge.

The first that we did hear of our brother was a letter with a Falmouth postmark, which we scarcely dared to open. There was not much in it, but that was enough. 'D. G.—I shall see you all again. We put in at Portsmouth.'

There was no staying at home after that. We three lost no time in starting, for railways had become available, and by the time we had driven from the station at Portsmouth the *Douro* had been signalled.

Martyn took a boat and went on board alone, for besides that Emily did not like to leave me, her dress would have been a revelation that *all* were no longer there to greet the arrival. The precaution was, however, unnecessary. There stood

Clarence on deck, and after the first greeting, he laid his hand on Martyn's arm and said, 'My mother is gone?' and on the wondering assent, 'I was quite sure of it.'

So they came ashore, Clarence lying in the man-of-war's boat, in which his friend insisted on sending him, able now to give a smiling response and salute to the three cheers with which the crew took leave of him. He was carried up to our hotel on a stretcher by half-a-dozen blue jackets. Indeed he was grievously changed, looking so worn and weak, so hollow-eyed and yellow, and so fearfully wasted, that the very memory is painful; and able to do nothing but lie on the sofa holding Emily's hand, gazing at us with a face full of ineffable peace and gladness. There was a misgiving upon me that he had only come back to finish his work and bid us farewell.

Kindly and considerately they had sent him on before with Martyn. In a quarter of an hour's time his good doctor came in with Lawrence Frith, a considerable contrast to our poor Clarence, for the slim gypsy lad had developed into a strikingly handsome man, still slender and lithe, but with a fine bearing, and his bronzed complexion suiting well with his dark shining hair and beautiful eyes. They had brought some of the luggage, and the doctor insisted that his patient should go

to bed directly, and rest completely before trying to talk.

Then we heard that his condition, though still anxious, was far from being hopeless, and that after the tropics had been passed, he had been gradually improving. The kind doctor had got leave to go up to London with us, and talk over the case with L——, and he hoped Clarence might be able to bear the journey by the next afternoon.

Presently after came Captain Coles, whom we had not seen since the short visit when we had idolised the big overgrown midshipman, whom Clarence exhibited to our respectful and distant admiration nearly twenty years ago. My mother used to call him a gentlemanly lad, and that was just what he was still, with a singularly soft gentle manner, gallant officer and post-captain as he was. He cheered me much, for he made no doubt of Clarence's ultimate recovery, and he added that he had found the dear fellow so valued and valuable, so useful in all good works, and so much respected by all the English residents, 'that really,' said the captain, 'I did not know whether to deplore that the service should have lost such a man, or whether to think it had been a good thing for him, though not for us, that—that he got into such a scrape.'

I said something of our thanks.

'To tell you the truth,' said Coles, 'I had my

doubts whether it had not been a cruel act, for he had a terrible turn after we got him on board, and all the sounds of a Queen's ship revived the past associations, and always of a painful kind in his delirium, till at last, just as I gave him up, the whole character of his fancies seemed to change, and from that time he has been gaining every day.'

We kept the captain to dinner, and gathered a good deal more understanding of the important position to which Clarence had risen by force of character and rectitude of purpose in that strange little Anglo-Chinese colony; and afterwards, I was allowed to make a long visit to Clarence, who, having eaten and slept, was quite ready to talk.

It seemed that the great distress of his illness had been the recurrence—nay, aggravation—of the strange susceptibility of brain and nerve that had belonged to his earlier days, and with it either imagination or perception of the spirit-world. Much that had seemed delirium had belonged to that double consciousness, and he perfectly recollected it. As Coles had said, the sights and sounds of the ship had been a renewal of the saddest time in his life; he could not at night divest himself of the impression that he was under arrest, and the sins of his life gathered themselves in fearful and oppressive array, as if to stifle him, and the phantom of poor Margaret with her lamp—which had haunted

him from the beginning of his illness—seemed to taunt him with having been too fainthearted and tardy to be worthy to espouse her cause. The faith to which he tried to cling *would* seem to fail him in those awful hours, when he could only cry out mechanical prayers for mercy. Then there had come a night when he had heard my mother say, 'All right now; God Almighty bless him.' And therewith the clouds cleared from his mind. The power of *feeling*, as well as believing in, the blotting out of sin, returned, the sense of pardon and peace calmed him, and from that time he was fully himself again, 'though,' he said, 'I knew I should not see my mother here.'

If she could only have seen him come home under the Union Jack, cheered by sailors, and carried ashore by them, it would have been to her like restoration. Perhaps Clarence in his dreamy weakness had so felt it, for certainly no other mode of return to Portsmouth, the very place of his degradation, could so have soothed him and effaced those memories. The English sounds were a perfect charm to him, as well as to Lawrence, the commonest street cry, the very slices of bread and butter, anything that was not Chinese, was as water to the thirsty! And wasted as was his face, the quiet rest and joy were ineffable.

Still Portsmouth was not the best place for him,

and we were glad that he was well enough to go up to London in the afternoon; intensely delighting in the May beauty of the green meadows, and white blossoming hedgerows, and the Church towers, especially the gray massiveness of Winchester Cathedral. 'Christian tokens,' he said, instead of the gay, gilded pagodas and quaint crumpled roofs he had left. The soft haze seemed to be such a rest after the glare of perpetual clearness.

We were all born Londoners, and looked at the blue fog, and the broad, misty river, and the brooding smoke, with the affection of natives, to the amazement of Lawrence, who had never been in town without being browbeaten and miserable. That he hardly was now, as he sat beside Emily all the way up, though they did not say much to one another.

He told us it was quite a new sensation to walk into the office without timidity, and to have no fears of a biting, crushing speech about his parents or himself; but to have the clerks getting up deferentially as soon as he was known for Mr. Frith. He had hardly ever been allowed by his old uncle to come across Mr. Castleford, who was of course cordial and delighted to receive him, and, without loss of time, set forth to see Clarence.

The consultation with the physician had taken place, and it was not concealed from us that Clarence's health was completely shattered, and his state still

very precarious, needing the utmost care to give him any chance of recovering the effects of the last two years, when he had persevered, in spite of warning, in his eagerness to complete his undertaking, and then to secure what he had effected. The upshot of the advice given him was to spend the summer by the seaside, and if he had by that time gathered strength, and surmounted the symptoms of disease, to go abroad, as he was not likely to be able as yet to bear English cold. Business and cares were to be avoided, and if he had anything necessary to be done, it had better be got over at once, so as to be off his mind. Martyn and Frith gathered that the case was thought doubtful, and entirely dependent on constitution and rallying power. Clarence himself seemed almost passive, caring only for our presence and the accomplishment of his task.

We had a blessed thanksgiving for mercies received in the Margaret Street Chapel, as we called what is now All Saints; but he and I were unfit for crowds, and on Sunday morning availed ourselves of a friend's seat in our old church, which felt so natural and homelike to us elders that Martyn was scandalised at our taste. But it was the church of our Confirmation and first Communion, and Clarence rejoiced that it was that of his first home-coming Eucharist. What a contrast was he now to the shrinking boy, scarcely tolerated under his stigmatised

name. Surely the Angel had led him all his life through!

How happy we two were in the afternoon, while the others conducted Lawrence to some more noteworthy church.

'Now,' said Clarence, 'let us go down to Beachharbour. It must be done at once. I have been trying to write, and I can't do it,' and his face lighted with a quiet smile which I understood.

So we wrote to the principal hotel to secure rooms, and set forth on Tuesday, leaving Frith to finish with Mr. Castleford what could not be settled in the one business interview that had been held with Clarence on the Monday.

CHAPTER XXIII.

RESTITUTION.

'Ah! well for us all some sweet hope lies
Deeply buried from human eyes.'

WHITTIER.

THINGS always happen in unexpected ways. During the little hesitation and difficulty that always attend my transits at a station, a voice was heard to say, 'Oh! Papa, isn't that Edward Winslow?' Martyn gave a violent start, and Mr. Fordyce was exclaiming, 'Clarence, my dear fellow, it isn't you! I beg your pardon; you have strength enough left nearly to wring one's hand off!'

'I—I wanted very much to see you, sir,' said Clarence. 'Could you be so good as to appoint a time?'

'See you! We must always be seeing you of course. Let me think. I've got three weddings and a funeral to-morrow, and Simpson coming about the meeting. Come to luncheon—all of you. Mrs. Fordyce will be delighted, and so will somebody else.'

There was no doubt about the somebody else, for Anne's feet were as nearly dancing round Emily as public propriety allowed, and the radiance of her face was something to rejoice in. Say what people will, Englishwomen in a quiet cheerful life are apt to gain rather than lose in looks up to the borders of middle age. Our Emily at two-and-thirty was fair and pleasant to look on; while as for Anne Fordyce at twenty-three, words will hardly tell how lovely were her delicate features, brown eyes, and carnation cheeks, illuminated by that sunshine brightness of her father's, which made one feel better all day for having been beamed upon by either of them. Clarence certainly did, when the good man turned back to say, 'Which hotel? Eh? That's too far off. You must come nearer. I would see you in, but I've got a woman to see before church time, and I'm short of a curate, so I must be sharp to the hour.'

'Can I be of any use?' eagerly asked Martyn. 'I'll follow you as soon as I have got these fellows to their quarters.'

We had Amos with us, and were soon able to release Martyn, after a few compliments on my not being as usual *the* invalid; and by and by he came back to take Emily to inspect a lodging, recommended by our friends, close to the beach, and not a stone's throw from the Rectory built by Mr.

Fordyce. As we two useless beings sat opposite to each other, looking over the roofs of houses at the blue expanse and feeling the salt breeze, it was no fancy that Clarence's cheek looked less wan, and his eyes clearer, as a smile of content played on his lips. 'Years sit well on her,' he said gaily; and I thought of rewards in store for him.

Then he took this opportunity of consulting me on the chances for Frith, telling of the original offer, and the quiet constancy of his friend, and asking whether I thought Emily would relent. And I answered that I suspected that she would,—'But you must get well first.'

'I begin to think that more possible,' he answered, and my heart bounded as he added, 'she would be satisfied since you would always have a home with *us*.'

Oh, how much was implied in that monosyllable. He knew it, for a little faint colour came up, as he, shyly, laughed and hesitated, 'That is—if——'

'If' included Mrs. Fordyce's not being ungracious. Nor was she. Emily had found her as kind as in the old days at Hillside, and perfectly ready to bring us into close vicinity. It was not caprice that had made this change, but all possible doubt and risk of character were over, the old wound was in some measure healed, and the friendship had

been brought foremost by our recent sorrow and our present anxiety. Anne was in ecstasies over Emily. 'It is so odd,' she said, 'to have grown as old as you, whom I used to think so very grown up,' and she had all her pet plans to display in the future. Moreover, Martyn had been permitted to relieve the Rector from the funeral—a privilege which seemed to gratify him as much as if it had been the liveliest of services.

We were to lunch at the Rectory, and the move of our goods was to be effected while we were there. We found Mrs. Fordyce looking much older, but far less of an invalid than in old times, and there was something more genial and less exclusive in her ways, owing perhaps to the difference of her life among the many classes with whom she was called on to associate.

Somersetshire, Beachharbour, and China occupied our tongues by turns, and we had to begin luncheon without the Rector, who had been hindered by numerous calls; in fact, as Anne warned us, it was a wonder if he got the length of the esplanade without being stopped half-a-dozen times.

His welcome was like himself, but he needed a reminder of Clarence's request for an interview. Then we repaired to the study, for Clarence begged that his brothers might be present, and then the beginning was made. 'Do you remember my show-

ing you a will that I found in the ruins at Chantry House?'

'A horrid old scrap that you chose to call one. Yes; I told you to burn it.'

'Sir, we have proved that a great injustice was perpetrated by our ancestor, Philip Winslow, and that the poor lady who made that will was cruelly treated, if not murdered. This is no fancy; I have known it for years past, but it is only now that restitution has become possible.'

'Restitution? What are you talking about? I never wanted the place nor coveted it.'

'No, sir, but the act was our forefather's. You cannot bid us sit down under the consciousness of profiting by a crime. I could not do so before, but I now implore you to let me restore you either Chantry House and the three farms, or their purchase money, according to the valuation made at my father's death. I have it in hand.'

Frank Fordyce walked about the room quite overcome. 'You foolish fellow!' he said, 'Was it for this that you have been toiling and throwing away your health in that pestiferous place? Edward, did you know this?'

'Yes,' I answered. 'Clarence has intended this ever since he found the will.'

'As if that was a will! You consented.'

'We all thought it right.'

He made a gesture of dismay at such folly.

'I do not think you understand how it was, Mr. Fordyce,' said Clarence, who by this time was quivering and trembling as in his boyish days.

'No, nor ever wish to do so. Such matters ought to be forgotten, and you don't look fit to say another word.'

'Edward will tell you,' said Clarence, leaning back.

I had the whole written out, and was about to begin, when the person, with whom there was an appointment, was reported, and we knew that the rest of the day was mapped out.

'Look here,' said Mr. Fordyce, 'leave that with me; I can't give any answer off-hand, except that Don Quixote is come alive again, only too like himself.'

Which was true, for Clarence took long to rally from the effort, and had to be kept quiet for some time in the study where we were left. He examined me on the contents of my paper, and was vexed to hear that I had mentioned the ghost, which he said would discredit the whole. Never was the dear fellow so much inclined to be fretful, and when Martyn restlessly observed that if we did not want him, he might as well go back to the drawing-room, the reply was quite sharp—'Oh yes, by all means.'

No wonder there was pain in the tone; for the next words, after some interval, were, when two

happy voices came ringing in from the garden behind, 'You see, Edward.'

Somehow I had never thought of Martyn. He had simply seemed to me a boy, and I had decided that Anne would be the crown of Clarence's labours. I answered 'Nonsense; they are both children together!'

'The nonsense was elsewhere,' he said. 'They always were devoted to each other. I saw how it was the moment he came into the room.'

'Don't give up,' I said; 'it is only the old habit. When she knows all, she must prefer——'

'Hush!' he said. 'An old scarecrow and that beautiful young creature!' and he laughed.

'You won't be an old scarecrow long.'

'No,' he said in an ominous way, and cut short the discussion by going back to Mrs. Fordyce.

He was worn out, had a bad night, and did not get up to breakfast; I was waiting for it in the sitting-room, when Mr. Fordyce came in after matins with Emily and Martyn.

'I feel just like David when they brought him the water of Bethlehem,' he said. 'You know I think this all nonsense, especially this—this ghost business; and yet, such—such doings as your brother's can't go for nothing.'

His face worked, and the tears were in his eyes; then, as he partook of our breakfast, he cross-examined us on my statement, and even tried to persuade us

that the phantom in the ruin was Emily; and on her observing that she could not have seen herself, he talked of the Brocken Spectre and fog mirages; but we declared the night was clear, and I told him that all the rational theories I had ever heard were far more improbable than the appearance herself, at which he laughed. Then he scrupulously demanded whether this—this (he failed to find a name for it) would be an impoverishment of our family, and I showed how Clarence had provided that we should be in as easy circumstances as before. In the midst came in Clarence himself, having hastened to dress, on hearing that Mr. Fordyce was in the house, and looking none the better for the exertion.

'Look here, my dear boy,' said Frank, taking his hot trembling hand, 'you have put me in a great fix. You have done the noblest deed at a terrible cost, and whatever I may think, it ought not to be thrown away, nor you be hindered from freeing your soul from this sense of family guilt. But here, my forefathers had as little right to the Chantry as yours, and ever since I began to think about such things, I have been thankful it was none of mine. Let us join in giving it or its value to some good work for God—pour it out to the Lord, as we may say. Bless me! what have I done now.'

For Clarence, muttering 'thank you,' sank out of his grasp on a chair, and as nearly as possible

fainted; but he was soon smiling and saying it was all relief, and he felt as if a load he had been bearing had been suddenly removed.

Frank Fordyce durst stay no longer, but laid his hand on Clarence's head and blessed him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FORDYCE STORY.

> ‘ For soon as once the genial plain
> Has drunk the life-blood of the slain,
> Indelible the spots remain,
> And aye for vengeance call.’
>
> EURIPIDES—(*Anstice*).

STILL all was not over, for by the next day our brother was as ill, or worse, than ever. The doctor who came from London allowed that he had expected something of the kind, but thought we must have let him exert himself perilously. Poor innocent Martyn and Anne, they little suspected that their bright eyes and happy voices had something to do with the struggle and disappointment, which probably was one cause of the collapse. As to poor Frank Fordyce, I never saw him so distressed; he felt as if it were all his own fault, or that of his ancestors, and, whenever he was not required by his duties, was lingering about for news. I had little hope, though Clarence seemed to me the very light of my eyes; it was to me as though, his task being

accomplished, and the earthly reward denied, he must be on his way to the higher one.

His complete quiescence confirmed me in the assurance that he thought so himself. He was too ill for speech, but Lawrence, who could not stay away, was struck with the difference from former times. Not only were there no delusions, but there was no anxiety or uneasiness, as there had always been in the former attacks, when he was evidently eager to live, and still more solicitous to be told if he were in a hopeless state. Now he had plainly resigned himself—

'Content to live, but not afraid to die;'

and perhaps, dear fellow, it was chiefly for my sake that he was willing to live. At least, I know that when the worst was over, he announced it by putting those wasted fingers into mine, and saying—

'Well, dear old fellow, I believe we shall jog on together, after all.'

That attack, though the most severe of all, brought, either owing to skilful treatment or to his own calm, the removal of the mischief, and the beginning of real recovery. Previously he had given himself no time, but had hurried on to exertions which retarded his cure, so as very nearly to be fatal; but he was now perfectly submissive to

whatever physicians or nurses desired, and did not seem to find his slow convalescence in the least tedious, since he was amongst us all again.

It was nearly a month before he was disposed to recur to the subject of his old solicitude again, and then he asked what Mr. Fordyce had said or done. Just nothing at all; but on the next visit paid to the sick-room, Parson Frank yielded to his earnest request to send for any documents that might throw light on the subject, and after a few days he brought us a packet of letters from his deed-box. They were written from Hillside Rectory to the son in the army in Flanders, chiefly by his mother, and were full of hot, angry invective against our family, and pity for poor, foolish 'Madam,' or 'Cousin Winslow,' as she was generally termed, for having put herself in their power.

The one most to the purpose was an account of the examination of Molly Cox, the waiting-woman, who had been in attendance on the unfortunate Margaret, and whose story tallied fairly with Aunt Peggy's tradition. She declared that she was sure that her mistress had met with foul play. She had left her as usual at ten o'clock on the fatal 27th of December 1707, in the inner one of the old chambers; and in the night had heard the tipsy return home of the gentlemen, followed by shrieks. In the morning she (the maid) who usually was the

first to go to her room, was met by Mistress Betty Winslow, and told that Madam was ill, and insensible. The old nurse of the Winslows was called in; and Molly was never left alone in the sick-room, scarcely permitted to approach the bed, and never to touch her lady. Once, when emptying out a cup at the garden-door, she saw a mark of blood on the steps, but Mr. Philip came up and swore at her for a prying fool. Doctor Tomkins was sent for, but he barely walked through the room, and 'all know that he is a mere creature of Philip Winslow,' wrote the Mrs. Fordyce of that date to her son. And presently after, 'Justice Eastwood declared there is no case for a Grand Jury; but he is a known Friend and sworn Comrade of the Winslows, and bound to suppress all evidence against them. Nay, James Dearlove swears he saw Edward Winslow slip a golden Guinea into his Clerk's Hand. But as sure as there is a Heaven above us, Francis, poor Cousin Winslow was trying to escape to us of her own Kindred, and met with cruel Usage. Her Blood is on their Heads.'

'There!' said Frank Fordyce. 'This Francis challenged Philip Winslow's eldest son, a mere boy, three days after he joined the army before Lille, and shot him like a dog. I turned over the letter about it in searching for these. I can't boast of my ancestors more than you can. But may God

accept this work of yours, and take away the guilt of blood from both of us.'

'And have you thought what is best to be done?' asked Clarence, raising himself on his cushions.

'Have you?' asked the Vicar.

'Oh yes; I have had my dreams.'

They put their castles together, and they turned out to be for an orphanage, or rather asylum, not too much hampered with strict rules, combined with a convalescent home. The battle of sisterhoods was not yet fought out, and we were not quite prepared for them; but Frank Fordyce had, as he said, 'the two best women in the world in his eye' to make a beginning.

There was full time to think and discuss the scheme, for our patient was in no condition to move for many weeks, lying day after day on a couch just within the window of our sitting-room, which was as nearly as possible in the sea, so that he constantly had the freshness of its breezes, the music of its ripple, and the sight of its waves, and seemed to find endless pleasure in watching the red sails, the puffs of steam, and the frolics of the children, simple or gentle, on the beach.

Something else was sometimes to be watched. Martyn, all this time, was doing the work of two curates, and was to be seen walking home with Anne from church or school, carrying her baskets

and bags, and, as we were given to understand, discussing by turns ecclesiastical questions, visionary sisterhoods, and naughty children. At first I wished it were possible to remove Clarence from the perpetual spectacle, but we had one last talk over the matter, and this was quite satisfactory.

'It does me no harm,' he said; 'I like to see it. Yes, it is quite true that I do. What was personal and selfish in my fancies seems to have been worn out in the great lull of my senses under the shadow of death; and now I can revert with real joy and thankfulness to the old delight of looking on our dear Ellen as our sister, and watch those two children as we used when they talked of dolls' fenders instead of the surplice war. I have got you, Edward; and you know there is a love "passing the love of women."'

A lively young couple passed by the window just then, and with untamed voices observed—

'There are those two poor miserable objects! It is enough to make one melancholy only to look at them.'

Whereat we simultaneously burst out laughing; perhaps because a choking, very far from misery, was in our throats.

At any rate, Clarence was prepared to be the cordial, fatherly brother, when Martyn came headlong in upon us with the tidings that utterly inde-

scribable, unimaginable joy had befallen him. A revelation seemed simultaneously to have broken upon him and Anne while they were copying out the Sunday School Registers, that what they had felt for each other all their lives was love—'real, true love,' as Anne said to Emily, 'that never could have cared for anybody else.'

Mrs. Fordyce's sharp eyes had seen what was coming, and accepted the inevitable, quite as soon as Clarence had. She came and talked it over with us, saying she was perfectly satisfied and happy. Martyn was all that could be wished, and she was sincerely glad of the connection with her old friends. So, in fact, was dear old Frank, but he had been running about with his head full, and his eyes closed, so that it was quite a shock to him to find that his little Anne, his boon companion and playfellow, was actually grown up, and presuming to love and be loved; and he could hardly believe that she was really seven years older than her sister had been when the like had begun with her. But if Anne must be at those tricks, he said, shaking his head at her, he had rather it was with Martyn than anybody else.

There was no difficulty as to money matters. In truth, Martyn was not so good a match as an heiress, such as was Anne Fordyce, might have aspired to, and her Lester kin were sure to be

shocked; but even if Clarence married, the Earlscombe living went for something (though, by the bye, he has never held it), and the Fordyces only cared that there should be easy circumstances. The living of Hillside would be resigned in favour of Martyn in the spring, and meantime he would gain more experience at Beachharbour, and this would break the separation to the Fordyces.

After all, however, theirs was not to be our first wedding. I have said little of Emily. The fact was, that after that week of Clarence's danger, we said she lived in a kind of dream. She fulfilled all that was wanted of her, nursing Clarence, waiting on me, ordering dinner, making the tea, and so forth; but it was quite evident that life began for her on the Saturdays, when Lawrence came down, and ended on the Mondays, when he went away. If, in the meantime, she sat down to work, she went off into a trance; if she was sent out for fresh air, she walked quarter-deck on the esplanade, neither seeing nor hearing anything, we averred, but some imaginary Lawrence Frith.

If she had any drawback, good girl, it was the idea of deserting me; but then, as I could honestly tell her, nobody need fear for my happiness, since Clarence was given back to me. And she believed, and was ready to go to China with her Lawrence.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE LAST DISCOVERY.

'Grief will be joy if on its edge
Fall soft that holiest ray,
Joy will be grief, if no faint pledge
Be there of heavenly day.'

KEBLE.

WE did not move from Beachharbour till September, and by that time it had been decided that Chantry House itself should be given up to the new scheme. It was too large for us, and Clarence had never lived there enough to have any strong home feeling for it; but he rather connected it with disquiet and distress, and had a longing to make actual restitution thereof, instead of only giving an equivalent, as he did in the case of the farms. Our feelings about the desecrated chapel were also considerably changed from the days when we regarded it merely as a picturesque ruin, and it was to be at once restored both for the benefit of the orphanage, and for that of the neighbouring households. For ourselves, a cottage was to be built, suited to our

idiosyncrasies; but that could wait till after the yacht voyage, which we were to make together for the winter.

Thus it came to pass that the last time we inhabited Chantry House was when we gave Emily to Lawrence Frith. We would fain have made it a double wedding, but the Fordyces wished to wait for Easter, when Martyn would have been inducted to Hillside. They came, however, that Mrs. Fordyce might act lady of the house, and Anne be bridesmaid, as well as lay the first stone of St. Cecily's restored chapel.

It was on the day on which they were expected, when the workmen were digging foundations, and clearing away rubbish, that the foreman begged Mr. Winslow to come out to see something they had found. Clarence came back, very grave and awe-struck. It was an old oak chest, and within lay a skeleton, together with a few fragments of female clothing, a wedding ring, and some coins of the later Stewarts, in a rotten leathern purse. This was ghastly confirmation, though there was nothing else to connect the bones with poor Margaret. We had some curiosity as to the coffin in the niche in the family vault which bore her name; but both Clarence and Mr. Fordyce shrank from investigations which could not be carried out without publicity, and might perhaps have disturbed other remains.

So on the ensuing night there was a strange, quiet funeral service at Earlscombe Church. Mr. Henderson officiated, and Chapman acted as clerk. These, with Amos Bell, alone knew the tradition, or understood what the discovery meant to the two Fordyces and three Winslows who stood at the opening of the vault, and prayed that whatever guilt there might be should be put away from the families so soon to be made one. The coins were placed with those of Victoria, which the next day Anne laid beneath the foundation-stone of St. Cecily's. I need not say that no one has ever again heard the wailings, nor seen the lady with the lamp.

What more is there to tell? It was of this first half of our lives that I intended to write, and though many years have since passed, they have not had the same character of romance and would not interest you. Our honeymoon, as Mr. Fordyce called the expedition we two brothers made in the Mediterranean, was a perfect success; and Clarence regained health, and better spirits than had ever been his; while contriving to show me all that I was capable of being carried to see. It was complete enjoyment, and he came home, not as strong as in old times, but with fair comfort and capability for the work of life, so as to be able to take Mr. Castleford's place, when our dear old friend retired from active direction of the firm.

You all know how the two old bachelors have kept house together in London and at Earlscombe cottage, and you are all proud of the honoured name Clarence Winslow has made for himself, foremost in works for the glory of God and the good of men—as one of those merchant princes of England whose merchandise has indeed been Holiness unto the Lord. Thus you must all have felt a shock on finding that he always looked on that name as blotted, and that one of the last sayings I heard from him was, 'O remember not the sins and offences of my youth, but according to Thy mercy, think upon me, O Lord, for Thy goodness.'

Then he almost smiled, and said, 'Yes, He has so looked on me, and I am thankful.'

Thankful, and so am I, for those thirty-four peaceful years we spent together, or rather for the seventy years of perfect brotherhood that we have been granted, and though he has left me behind him, I am content to wait. It cannot be for long. My brothers and sisters, their children, and my faithful Amos Bell, are very good to me; and in writing up to that *mezzo termine* of our lives, I have been living it over again with my brother of brothers, through the troubles that have become like joys.

REMARKS.

Uncle Edward has not said half enough about

his dear old self. I want to know if he never was unhappy when he was young about being *like that*, though mother says his face was always nearly as beautiful as it is now. And it is not only goodness. It *is* beautiful with his sweet smile and snowy white hair. ELLEN WINSLOW.

And I wonder, though perhaps he could not have told, what Aunt Anne would have done if Uncle Clarence had not been so forbearing before he went to China. CLARE FRITH.

The others are highly impertinent questions, but we ought to know what became of Lady Peacock.

ED. G. W.

REPLY.

Poor woman, she drifted back to London after about ten years, with an incurable disease. Clarence put her into lodgings near us, and did his best for her as long as she lived. He had a hard task, but she ended by saying he was her only friend.

To question No. 2 I have nothing to say; but as to No. 1, with its extravagant compliment, Nature, or rather God, blessed me with even spirits, a methodical nature that prefers monotony, and very

little morbid shyness; nor have I ever been devoid of tender care and love. So that I can only remember three severe fits of depression. One, when I had just begun to be taken out in the Square Gardens, and Selina Clarkson was heard to say I was a hideous little monster. It was a revelation, and must have given frightful pain, for I remember it acutely after sixty-five years.

The second fit was just after Clarence was gone to sea, and some very painful experiments had been tried in vain for making me like other people. For the first time I faced the fact that I was set aside from all possible careers, and should be, as I remember saying, 'no better than a girl.' I must have been a great trial to all my friends. My father tried to reason on resignation, and tell me happiness could be *in* myself, till he broke down. My mother attempted bracing by reproof. Miss Newton endeavoured to make me see that this was my cross. Every word was true, and came round again, but they only made me for the time more rebellious and wretched. That attack was ended, of all things in the world, by heraldry. My attention somehow was drawn that way, and the study filled up time and thought till my misfortunes passed into custom, and haunted me no more.

My last was a more serious access, after coming into the country, when improved health and vigour

inspired cravings that made me fully sensible of my blighted existence. I had gone the length of my tether and overdone myself; I missed London life and Clarence; and the more I blamed myself, and tried to rouse myself, the more despondent and discontented I grew.

This time my physician was Mr. Stafford; I had deciphered a bit of old French and Latin for him, and he was very much pleased. 'Why, Edward,' he said, 'you are a very clever fellow; you can be a distinguished—or what is better—a useful man.'

Somehow that saying restored the spring of hope, and gave an impulse! I have not been a distinguished man, but I think in my degree I have been a fairly useful one, and I am sure I have been a happy one. E. W.

'Useful! that you have, dear old fellow. Even if you had done nothing else, and never been an unconscious backbone to Clarence; your influence on me and mine has been unspeakably blest. But pray, Mistress Anne, how about that question of naughty little Clare's?' M. W.

'Don't you think you had better let alone that question, reverend sir? Youngest pets are apt to

be saucy, especially in these days, but I didn't expect it of you! It might have been the worse for you if W. C. W. had not held his tongue in those days. Just like himself, but I am heartily glad that so he did. A. W.'

THE END.

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